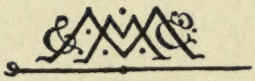
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A SCENE IN THE YAMEN HIGHLANDS.

Frontispiece.

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ARABIA INFELIX

OR

THE TURKS IN YAMEN

BY

G. WYMAN BURY

AUTHOR OF 'THE LAND OF UZ

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS & MAPS

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PREFACE

Since this book went to press the Powers of Europe have grappled in a struggle that is shaking the western hemisphere.

Turkey, after wobbling for weeks on the brink of hostilities, has been pushed over by her Turco-German war-party. The whole incident shows how a strong military clique can drive an unstable government to disaster.

Turkey's attitude towards the British, who have guaranteed the integrity of her empire for more than half a century, is largely the outcome of Teutonic intrigue, but our action in retaining her two new battleships (the *Sultan Osman* and the *Reshadieh*) had more to do with it than most of us imagine. The subscription for those ships was a religious matter, to which all classes had contributed their utmost. We should not like our subscriptions for a new cathedral to be arbitrarily diverted to the building of a mosque.

By the law of nations we were justified in our embargo on those battleships, but sentiment is impervious to logic, and popular feeling in Turkey became violently Anglophobe, though many of her greatest men realized what her departure from neutrality would mean.

Turkey in Arabia will probably cease to exist—to the advantage of both parties, for her Arabian provinces are a constant drain on Turkey's resources, and Turkish rule is the curse of Arabia.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and Yamen may yet snatch her independence out of this world-wide welter,—whether she can use it to the best advantage is another question. In any case that 'most distressful country' has my best wishes.

G. WYMAN BURY.

CAIRO, 5*th December*, 1914.

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CHAPTER I

YAMEN, PAST AND PRESENT

For fifteen years I have been connected with south-west Arabia, which ancient sages have described, comparatively, as 'Happy.' The happiness of this region has seldom been noticeable, and its woes have waxed with ripening years until they bid fair to culminate in a crop which the sword alone can harvest.

In a previous work I have dealt with the Aden hinterland and its protected tribes.[1] To that I have little to add at present except to note that these tribes preserve their own autonomy and are under certain treaty obligations with the Aden Government. These obligations are observed—when not inconvenient—in inverse ratio to the protected tribe's distance from Aden.

We have no troops outside a ten-mile limit from the fortress and do not interfere in tribal or inter-tribal politics.

Within sight of Aden Club, across the harbour, some fifty miles toward the north-west, rise the black jagged peaks of Am-Amma, well within the Ottoman vilayet of Yamen.

Turkey in Yamen is too close a neighbour for us to disregard her troubles and, though we may ignore the

[1] 'The Land of Uz' (Macmillan).

murders and petty broils that occur among the tribes of the Aden Protectorate, a general upheaval might compel our attention.

It is with Yamen and her affairs that I propose to deal. To appreciate the situation a knowledge of her past history is essential. This is difficult to acquire, as there are few works on the subject accessible to the ordinary reader, while her various historians differ widely on important points. In the brief outline given in these pages I have depended chiefly on Arab and Roman writers, checked by local tradition. I am also indebted to the *Chronological Synopsis of Arabian History*, by Redhouse, Huart's *Histoire des Arabes*, and the preliminary discourse of Sale's Koran.

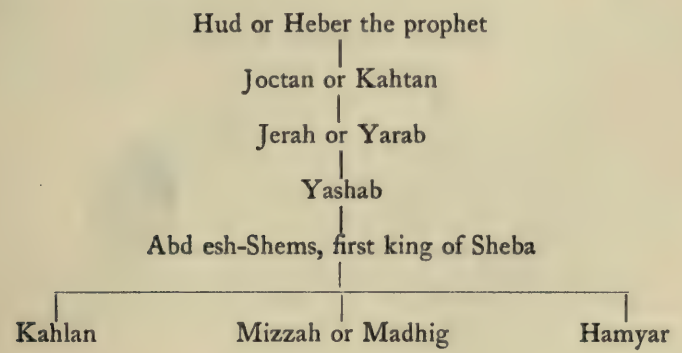
Veiled in the mists of antiquity is the ancient Minean kingdom, the earliest recorded rule in Yamen. All that has come down to us is a list of some thirty monarchs with most uncertain dates. The central government was at Karna in Jauf. The old 'lost' Arabian tribes mentioned by Sale were probably vassals of this kingdom, which certainly flourished about 3000 B.C., and must have been extensive, for Minean inscriptions to Ashtaroth occur from Sinai to South Arabia. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, was a Minean priest of princely lineage but lived almost on sufferance in the land of Midian, for the Minean tide of immigration and conquest which imposed the Hyksos on Egypt had already ebbed.

The first concrete fact in the history of Yamen is the birth of Joctan, son of Eber, B.C. 2246. I identify Eber with Heber the prophet, or Hud, as the Arabs call him, who preached to the ancient Adites and warned them of Divine vengeance. This is said to have over-

taken them in the form of a raging simoom along the western margin of what is now known among Arabs as Ruba al-Khali or the Empty Quarter and to Europeans as the Great Red Desert.

As a matter of fact this obliteration of the people of Ad was probably very gradual and caused by encroachment of the desert due to a diminishing rainfall and a prevalent north-easterly wind. These causes are still at work on the south-west corner of the Empty Quarter. But to return to Joctan or Kahtan, as the Arabs call him. He was a native of the Hadramaut valley but settled in Yamen and introduced architecture and agriculture among the pastoral and tent-dwelling tribes. His son Yarab (or Jerah of Genesis) was the progenitor of Yamen Arabic and first separated the Arabian tongue from ancient Hebrew. He it was who founded the Sabean kingdom in Yamen on the ruins of the old Minean dynasty, which had dwindled to a mere tribal confederation in Southern Jauf and was known then and since as Maan—the Arab title for the dynasty itself.

The following genealogy will give a fairly concise idea of the Sabean kingdom and the Hamyarite dynasty into which it merged:



Abd esh-Shems (servant of the Sun) introduced as a state religion the Sabean cult or worship of the seven heavenly bodies, the Sun, the Moon, and the five planets then known. He made his capital at Sheba or Saba (the Arabic for seven), where he built with forced labour the famous reservoir and dam. This held up surface drainage across a large valley, forming a lake which supplied water to the district and ensured its fertility. The Arab town of Mareb (about 100 miles east of Sanaa) now stands on the site of this ancient city, where the ruins of the great dam are still to be seen.

Kahlan succeeded his father. I discovered the sand-silted ruins of a city bearing his name near Behan al-Gezab, on the south-west corner of the Great Desert, in 1900.

Hamyar succeeded Kahlan and founded the Hamyarite dynasty. All that remains of it now is the tribe of Hamyar, a predatory lot of semi-nomadic mountaineers that range the hills of Bal-Haf on the South Arabian coast some 200 miles east of Aden.

I once met a clan called the Madhigi among the foot-hills south of the Great Desert and north of the Yeshbum valley. They claimed descent from Abd esh-Shems, but admitted that their branch had never held sovereign sway. They had come from the North.

There seems to have been a constant ebb southward ever since the fall of the Hyksos; Maan, for example, drew in from the North and from Yamen to Southern Jauf and ruled there as a paramount tribe about the time of Mohamed. By then it had dwindled to a mere clan, and was much persecuted during a political outbreak under the early Khalifs. It fled from Jauf under the leadership of Ali—a scion of the former ruling house—

and his nephew Abdullah. Ali founded the present sultanate of Lower Aulaki in the eastern hinterland of Aden, and Abdullah that of Upper Aulaki, while the refugees of Maan, by conquest and alliance, have become the most important tribal unit of the Aulaki confederation.

But to hark back to the house of Hamyar.

This dynasty held sway in Yamen, through varying vicissitudes, until 523 A.D. Placing the rule of Abd esh-Shems about B.C. 2150, we have some mention of the building of the Caaba by Abraham and Ishmael in B.C. 1880, and the respect shown by the kings of Yamen for that building. The Egyptian conquest of Yamen, commenced by Thotmes II. (1633-1600 B.C.) and completed by his famous son Thotmes III., is our next landmark. Under Queen Hatshepset of this family, a voyage of discovery was made to the mystic land of Punt, 'the land of spices,' which I identify with the Hadramaut valley and not with any region on the western side of the Red Sea. I admit that the Hamyarites had colonized Somaliland and East Africa to a limited extent, explored gold mines and no doubt created, or at least developed, the trade in aromatic gums. The expedition is related in Egyptian sculptured history on the walls of the temple of Der al-Bahari at Thebes.

Egypt's hold on Yamen left little mark and must have been brief, for a century later (B.C. 1497 to be exact) we hear of a *bona-fide* Hamyarite king building obelisks as boundary marks, and in B.C. 1150 of another such monarch returning from an expedition of conquest in Ethiopia.

Bilkis, the Biblical Queen of Sheba or Saba, is worthy

of passing mention as a Hamyarite sovereign who reigned about B.C. 970. Then follows a long gap in Yamen history, and the next important landmark is the collapse of the great dam at Saba, the flooding of the whole district, and the destruction of the city with great loss of life, in B.C. 427.[1] This catastrophe led to the dispersal of the local population and dealt a grave blow to the central Hamyarite rule, for all the neighbourhood of Saba, from being well-watered and fertile, became a devastated wilderness amid barren hills, as it is to all intents and purposes now.

Yamen, Saba and the Hadramaut had frequently been united under one ruler with the title of Tobba, but the glory of Hamyar was, from henceforth, on the wane. Saba as a centre of administration had been wiped out, and its sway over what is now known as the Aden hinterland ceased to exist. The Hadramaut seceded, under an offshoot of Hamyar it is true, but Yamen alone remained of the actual Hamyarite kingdom.

In 18 B.C. we find Rome turning her attention to Arabian conquest in her usual methodical manner.

First we hear of Juba II., King of Numidia (a dependency of Rome that coincided approximately with Algeria), writing what may be described as an Intelligence report for the Emperor Augustus on the region which was Rome's objective. This report was called 'de expeditione arabica' and, to judge by such extracts as Pliny quotes, must have been the fullest and most detailed description of western Arabia ever written by a foreigner.

[1] According to Redhouse, though some authorities place it much later. I give this date as being in accord with local history and tradition.

On the strength of this report a Roman expedition was launched in command of Aelius Gallus, prefect of Egypt, a Roman knight of marked military ability. The expedition was also supported by the king of Nebatea or Arabia Petrea, whose vizier, Syllaeus, acted as chief expeditionary guide. Nebatean and Jew mercenaries accompanied the column.

The actual march commenced at Egra—presumably Akra, on the Arabian coast—about Lat. 26°, and probably the most southerly port to which Rome had access.

The column seems to have got on to the old pilgrim road to Medina and thence toward Mecca, which was a point of pilgrimage long before Islam. It passed two days eastward of Mecca *via* Karna (once the centre of Minean sway) and marched southward through Nejran and Jauf, probably to avoid being hopelessly entangled among the vast fortress-crowned hills of Yamen. Roman and Arab fought desperately on the banks of Wadi Kharid, which rises on the Sanaa plain and drains northward, entering the south-west corner of Jauf. The column swung clear of Sanaa, and the advance was finally checked outside the ancient town of Radman in Lat. 45° 14′ and Long. 14° 33′ by the tribes of Madhig and Ans. Madhig has dwindled to a mere clan and migrated southwards, as previously stated, but Ans is still in the hills south of Sanaa, a powerful tribe in one of the best coffee-growing districts of Yamen.

That Roman column, after a march of more than a thousand miles, found its further progress barred in a bitterly hostile country with a scanty supply of water, and its line of retreat beset with defeated but undaunted foes. If Arabs then were as they are now they must have hung tenaciously on the flanks and rear of that

retreating force, which yet managed to retrace its steps and get back to its original point of departure, though mauled by foes and decimated by privations and sickness to the verge of annihilation.

Strabo, the historian of this campaign and a friend of Aelius Gallus, has done much to fog the topography of the region described in his efforts to save the reputation of his friend. Such efforts seem unnecessary, for in the mind of anyone with experience of the Arabs and their country, the whole enterprise must stand out as a fine piece of tactics and organization in spite of its failure. The water-supply alone was a serious problem along much of the route followed, and it says much for the morale of the troops engaged that the column ever got back as a military unit.

The man with local knowledge who accompanies an expedition must expect to be ignored in success and bear the brunt of failure. Poor Syllaeus was no exception to the rule; they dragged him to Rome and cut his head off.

Early in the Christian era we find the new religion gaining ground in Yamen, side by side with Judaism, imported thither by refugees from the sack of Jerusalem under Titus in A.D. 70.

There were two Christian missions to Hamyar. The first sent by Athanasius and the next (under the Emperor Constantine) led by Theophilus Indus, who built a church at Aden.

Nejran embraced Christianity about A.D. 500. Sale describes the occasion in his preliminary discourse to the Koran. It was at this epoch that a persecution of Christians was commenced by the last Hamyarite Monarch of Yamen, a bigoted Jew named Dhu Nowas,

or 'lord of curls,' in which connection it may be mentioned that the Jews of Yamen have still to wear a curl or lock of hair on the side of the head.

The Christian Emperor of Constantinople communicated with the Christian Negus of Abyssinia and placed a Roman fleet at his disposal. There followed an Ethiopian invasion of Yamen, in which Dhu Nowas was defeated, and committed suicide by spurring his horse into the sea.

Aryat, the successful Ethiopian general, was appointed governor of Yamen by the Negus.

Abraha, another chief of the Abyssinian expedition, rose against Aryat, and the two leaders fought in single combat for ultimate rule. Abraha got his nose split, but Aryat was stabbed from behind in most unsporting fashion by a looker-on—a slave in Abraha's pay. Abraha now ruled Yamen in the name of the Negus, and built a fine church at Sanaa, of which there is little left but the site nowadays. Two Arab pagans of the Koreish, natives of Mecca, desecrated this church with their excrement on the eve of a solemn festival, and Abraha launched an expedition against Mecca to avenge the sacrilege. This happened the year Mohamed was born (A.D. 577), and is mentioned in Chapter 105 of the Koran (entitled the Elephant), for Abraha is said to have led the Abyssinian forces on an armoured elephant, which refused to enter Mecca. The story goes that high-soaring swallows dropped tiny pebbles on Abraha's army, piercing man and horse until the host was almost annihilated. Level-headed Moslem commentators point to the word 'herrashat,' which means small pebbles and also the 'pitting' of small-pox. A natural explanation is that an epidemic of small-pox scattered the troops of

Abraha, a theory supported by the fact that Abraha died of 'a loathsome disease' shortly after his return to Sanaa. Abraha's two sons ruled after him in succession—mere debauched tyrants whose yoke Yamen would not endure. Seif, a prince of Hamyar, appealed to the Emperor Heraclius, who as head of a Christian State refused to help him against the representative of Christian Abyssinia. Seif managed to secure the aid of Khosru Anushirwan (Chosmes II.) of Persia by bluffing to him of the gold to be found in Yamen. A Persian expedition put an end to Abyssinian tyranny, but Seif was slain in the *coup d'état* that occurred. Five Persian prefects were successively appointed, of whom the last, Badhan, submitted to Mohamed.

The Prophet, at his death, left Arabia under one rule and practically Moslem. Ali (Mohamed's nephew) had entered Yamen in the tenth year of the Hejrah (A.D. 628) with a strong force, to convert the population to Islam. This mission reached the shores of the Aden Gulf.

Said, the Christian bishop of Nejran,[1] procured by gifts an audience with the Prophet, who granted him a document enacting that Moslems should defend the diocese, that Christians should not be compelled to fight for Islam or change their religion, and that their priests should be free of tribute which, in the case of the laity, should be reasonable. Also that Christian slaves should serve Moslems without having to change their faith, and that the churches, closed by Ali's mission, should be re-opened. The earlier Khalifs are said to have granted similar diplomas.

[1] Gregentius, a previous bishop of Dhafar (probably Yerîm), had persuaded Abraha to cease his savage persecution of non-Christian Arabs. Gregentius had founded the Christian church in Nejran.

During the delirium of his last hours the Prophet said that all non-Moslems were to be banished from Arabia. It is doubtful whether he really recovered consciousness or had a lucid interval from Thursday, when he collapsed in his harem, to Monday, when he died. Ayesha, his most influential wife, said not; though her evidence was no doubt biassed by the fact that Mohamed proclaimed Ali as his successor during those last hours, and Ali had incurred Ayesha's lasting hate for his attitude when she once strayed behind the Prophet's caravan and was found and brought into camp by a good-looking stranger.

Ali's immediate succession was set aside, but the decree concerning Moslems was afterwards used as a weapon against Christians. There was no question of expelling the Jews; they had too great an economic value as craftsmen and financiers even at that early date, but all traces of Christianity disappeared from Nejran after the time of Bishop Khos in the seventh century A.D., though we read of a bishop of Yamen in the eighth century and of a Christian priest as late as the tenth century.

Yamen was then ruled by governors appointed by the early Khalifs, and rose in arms to support Moawiya, one of these governors, against the rule of Ali, the fourth Khalif. She remained faithful to the Ommeiyad dynasty, and passed to the Abbaside Khalifs together with the other states of Arabia.

Yamen was rent by the Karmation heresy in A.D. 905, when Mansur and Ali bin-Fadl seized the reins of Government. The latter was assassinated by means of a poisoned lancet, after a reign of the wildest excesses at Sanaa, and Mansur died a year later, leaving a son,

al-Hassan, whom the first of the Fatimite Khalifs appointed to rule in Yamen. Al-Hassan was murdered by the mountaineers of Shibam.

Hitherto Yamen had followed the Shiah doctrine, repudiating all Khalifs before Ali, but under the Fatimite dynasty the bulk of the population became orthodox Sunnis until 1035 A.D. Then a Persian Imam rose at Boan and seized Sanaa with his Shiite followers. This movement was crushed in 1047 by the Yamen house of Sulaihi, which also followed the Shiah doctrine. The rule of this house was marked by murder and feminine intrigue, during which Sanaa was taken and re-taken, and a state of anarchy existed till 1138, when Sultan Hatim of Yam came into power. He was conquered by a self-styled Imam, who proclaimed himself in Nejran as 'he who trusts in God.' Sultan Hatim hit on the smart idea of paying blood-money to settle the feuds between his vassal tribes, before whose united front the followers of the bogus Imam melted away.

Hatim died in 1161 A.D. and his son Ali ruled till Yamen was conquered by an expedition under a brother of Saladin. This house was supplanted in its second generation by the Rasoulides, who were descended from an officer of the original expedition named Rasoul. This dynasty ruled from 1217 to 1441 through a series of civil wars and a hotch-potch of upstart princes.

Then came another local house, the Tahir brothers, one of whom was killed in battle against an Imam of Sanaa. This house died out in 1488.

In 1514 the Egyptian fleet took most of the Yamen ports but Aden, which had successfully resisted Albuquerque in 1513.

Egypt came under Ottoman suzerainty in 1517, and

Sulieman Pasha, Turkish Governor of Egypt, occupied the coastal towns of Yamen and laid the foundation of Ottoman dominion there in 1538.

The Portuguese took Aden in 1540, but it was re-taken by a Turkish admiral in 1599.

Hassan Pasha, Turkish Governor of Yamen, occupied the whole vilayet in the name of the Sultan of Stamboul. This occupation lasted till 1630, when the Sublime Porte decided to evacuate Yamen on account of its remoteness and the expense involved.

Yamen was then governed by a family descended from a former Sharif of Mecca, a member of which, Mansur al-Kasim, first took the title of Imam. He died in 1620, and it was a direct descendant of his who was Imam of Yamen in 1763, when Niebuhr visited the country. Niebuhr mentions him under the name of al-Mahdi Abbas. The present Imam is of this house, which claims descent from Ali and Fatimah.

In 1801 the Wahabi movement blazed across Central Arabia and seized the Holy Places of Islam. A chief of Asîr sided with the movement and took many of the coastal towns of Yamen as far south as Mokha in 1804. Mohamed Ali Pasha of Egypt, charged by the Sultan of Stamboul to go against the Wahabis, tried to restore Egypt's power in Arabia by seizing several towns on the Yamen coast. These he restored to the Imam, al-Mahdi Abdullah, on tribute.

The central rule in Yamen was now hopelessly disintegrated. Aden and its hinterland had become independent of the Imams of Sanaa in 1728, and the British bombarded and occupied that port in 1839.

When the Pasha of Egypt revolted against the Porte in 1832, he sent Ahmed Pasha to occupy the Yamen

coast and Massowa. The Egyptians were compelled to evacuate by difficulties nearer home and the pressure of the Quadruple Alliance (Britain, Russia, Austria and Italy).

Sharif Husein of Abu Arish in Asîr, a relative of the Imam of Sanaa, then tried to bring the whole of Yamen under his rule. He found this beyond his powers and acknowledged Ottoman suzerainty. The Porte named him Governor of Yamen in 1843, with the title of Husein Pasha. He only ruled the coast, the interior recognizing the Imam of Sanaa, dignified by the ancient title of al-Mutawakkal, 'he who trusts (in God).' Al-Mutawakkal took Husein Pasha prisoner in battle (1848), but the Turkish nominee secured his liberty by ransom and showed such energy after his release that he reduced his relative al-Mutawakkal to the city of Sanaa as sole vestige of the Imam's sovereignty.

In 1849 the Turks landed at Hodeida to re-establish their power in Yamen. The Imam of Sanaa promptly recognized Ottoman suzerainty, but when the Turks got to Sanaa the townsmen rose and attacked the expeditionary corps. Its commander, Tewfik Pasha, was wounded in the street-fighting that ensued and retired to Hodeida with the remnant of his men. The Imam was beheaded by his irate subjects.

In 1869 the Suez Canal was opened, and the Porte sent troops under Raouf Pasha to deal with Yamen in earnest.

Hodeida was attacked in force by Mohamed Eyad, Emir of Asîr, in 1871, in the hopes of driving the Turks into the sea. The attempt was repulsed with great slaughter, for the Asîri were out to do or die. On the dead were found letters, signed by the Emir, which must

have tended to make them regardless of their earthly fate.

To my brother Gabriel:

So and so, son of so and so, is coming to you ; admit him to Heaven.

(Signed) Mohamed Eyad,
Emir of the Faithful.

The smashing up of this attack was followed by a determined advance into Asîr and the seizure of important fortresses in that province.

Raouf Pasha was invalided and succeeded by Mukhtar Pasha, who landed at Hodeida and entered Sanaa by capitulation in 1872, for the city was tired of its incompetent and quarrelsome rulers and wanted peace. The rest of Yamen was occupied successively, but not without bloodshed. Turkish rule has been shaken by several fierce rebellions. There was the great rising of 1891, which was sternly suppressed after heavy fighting, in which Sanaa had to be wrested from beleaguering rebels by Ahmed Faizi Pasha.

Another rising in 1904 led to the capitulation of Sanaa through famine, and all posts inland of Menakha had to surrender to the rebels. It was then that Ahmed Faizi Pasha travelled day and night across Arabia, from his appointment at Baghdad, to take ship at Yenbo and return to Hodeida once more to tackle affairs in Yamen, where he had shown firmness and ability.

He took command of the expeditionary column that had been collected on the coast and rushed it across the Tihama and up through the hills, fighting most of his way into Sanaa, except on the actual ridge of Menakha, which stood fast in the Sultan's name.

In 1911 Sanaa was again beleaguered by insurgent

tribes in the name of the Imam. Mohamed Ali Pasha was then Governor. He was relieved by Izzet Pasha, who succeeded him as military governor of Yamen.

Izzet Pasha inaugurated a policy which aimed at a *rapprochement* with the Imam, for he was shrewd enough to see that the military exigencies of the situation demanded some such policy if Turkey was to preserve even nominal sovereignty in Yamen.

For a long time the Porte refused to recognize such a measure, but Izzet Pasha was in earnest about it and returned to Stamboul in order to cabal for this object. He left as his successor in Yamen, a civilian, Mahmoud Nazim bey, who had been his right-hand man in negotiations with the Imam and, being a Syrian, has a perfect command of Arabic.

Mahmoud Nazim Pasha, as he is now called by courtesy, is the present civil governor or 'vali' of Yamen.

On September 22nd, 1913, an Imperial firman was publicly read at Sana proclaiming an *entente* with the Imam 'for the sake of peace between Moslems.' This firman merely ratifies accomplished facts, namely, that Yamen civil and criminal law be no longer based on the Turkish judicial code or 'Kanun,' but on the old Islamic code or 'Sheria,' and that this code be administered by nominees of the Imam, who draws a very substantial annual subsidy for himself and his vassal chiefs.

The Imam's influence is now dominant in Sanaa and of course paramount in all outlying districts that acknowledge his sway, backed by Ottoman troops. This influence gradually wanes toward the coast, and is not recognized in Asîr, where a rebel chief, known as the Idrìsi, is still in arms against Imam and Turk.

During the Turco-Italian war of 1912, the Italians blockaded the Yamen coast, using Massowa as a naval base. This blockade seriously affected British subjects, in whose hands is most of the Red Sea trade with the Arabian littoral, but did little harm to the Turks, who possess no maritime defences along that coast except at Sheikh Said, and merely withdrew troops inland a space when the Italians looked like bombarding.

Sheikh Said, a small town and fortress opposite Perim, more than held its own, for the Turks have some heavy modern guns there, mounted in well-concealed gun-pits near the crest of a tall hill.

The Italians backed the Idrìsi with arms and money, and this upset Yamen far more than their blockade, for the Idrìsi got hold of the Farsan Islands, and his activity in Asîr was a constant menace.

The Farsan Islands have now been re-taken by Turkey, and there seems some likelihood of a definite understanding with the Idrìsi, for a Turkish Governor has been appointed to Asîr ; it remains to be seen whether he can cope with the situation.

The Arabs themselves, remembering their past history, mistrust the Imam, but support him from patriotic motives, and they certainly dislike Turkish rule though admitting that the Turks are in Yamen by invitation, to a certain extent.

It is always easier to invite a guest than to get rid of him if he does not want to leave. The Arabs consider that the Turks have worn their welcome threadbare and would be glad to see the backs of them. The Turks are beginning to realize that the vilayet is a white elephant to them, but are disinclined to withdraw lest their prestige suffer in other parts of Arabia.

In the bad, bold, palmy days of Abd ul-Hamid, Ottoman officialdom in Yamen, from the Vali or Governor down to the last-joined recruit of Arab gendarmerie, 'milked' the vilayet for all it was worth on behalf of Government and for private ends.

The Arabs still tell tales of a Vali (a man of real ability) who did not disdain to sell corporal's stripes to the gendarme who knew how to approach him. He is said to have left Yamen with a comfortable fortune in specie packed among his personal baggage.

There are no such abuses nowadays in Yamen. On the contrary great concessions have been made, octroi and transit dues have been abolished and there are no taxes in the country now save tithes on land collected when and where Ottoman rule can be enforced. Dues are still levied at Customs ports and Municipal and Market rates in Turkish towns.

Ottoman rule in Yamen becomes more and more lenient, tact is the order of the day, and *laissez-faire*. The lesser officials in outlying districts, where a scanty *entourage* barely supports their dignity, find this régime rather trying. I have myself sat in divan with a worthy but weak old Mudir, and heard a flow of frenzied curses poured on his venerable head by a local petty chief who objected to some ruling of the Mudirat and successfully reversed it by the violence of his rhetoric. The local myrmidons of justice, armed to the teeth, poked their heads in at the door to hear the row, but, beyond looking shocked, took no definite action in the matter.

There is much to be seen and heard in local courts amid the hills of Yamen that would refresh those jaded minds that cling to official etiquette. The parties to a civil suit will always wrangle in open court and some-

times fight desperately until separated by superior force.

In a criminal case the prisoner always brings a substantial meal with him in case of an adverse verdict, and usually eats it while being interrogated to preserve his dignity and collect his wits. "Prison," said a debtor under sentence. "How can I go to prison when I'm in the middle of a week's ploughing?" The case was finally settled by agreement. The 'Court' is open to all and, throughout the proceedings, market-women will stroll in and proffer eggs and poultry to the Bench at current rates.

At administrative centres there is more dignity but no less leniency, yet the Arab population is covertly disaffected or openly hostile and, throughout the vilayet, Turkey is confronted by the writing on the wall.

CHAPTER II

THE VILAYET AND ITS PEOPLE

BROADLY speaking, the vilayet or governorship of Yamen is bounded on the north by the 20th parallel of latitude, on the south by the Aden Protectorate, on the west by the Red Sea, while Long. 45 may be taken as its eastern limit.

The southern border was clearly defined by an Anglo-Turkish Boundary Commission (1902-1905), but its eastern limit is vague and apt to vary with the ebb and flow of Ottoman politics.

The general geography of Yamen is simple enough.

There is first a coastal plain of varying width known as the Tihama. This is backed by maritime ranges, some actually on the coast as at Sheikh Said, while some are thirty miles or so inland, as in the district of Hodeida. These ranges sometimes culminate in isolated *massifs* of considerable height, and beyond them, eastward, the ground drops to inland plains intersected by the foot-hills of the main mountain system.

This system forms the western scarp of the great central plateau and rises like a wall, running north and south with a mean altitude of some 8000 feet, and occasional peaks of 9000-10,000 feet. The highest point of this plateau is between Yerim and Ebb, in which

neighbourhood the two great wadis of Tiban and Bana rise on opposite sides of the same watershed and drain southward to the Aden Gulf.

This central plateau is much broken by mountain ranges toward the south, and northward, in Asîr, loses much of its character among scattered ranges and the encroaching arms of the inland desert.

Its western scarp drains into the Red Sea, through such wadis as the Ashar, which comes out near Halli point, the Arish, which drains the hills of the turbulent Hashidi to the coast of Abu Arish, and Wadi es-Sirr, with its tributaries, which reaches the coast north of Loheia. All these are Asîri wadis that no one knows much about, but the Sardid, the Siham and Wadi Zabîd —all streams of Central Yamen that drain into the Red Sea—are well enough known and have been partially surveyed by French engineers in connection with the Hodeida-Sanaa railway scheme.

None of these can be called rivers, for they only flow into the sea when in spate. Among wadis that drain the eastern scarp and trend inland may be mentioned the great Dawâsir valley and its tributaries in Asîr, which drain into Nejd, Wadi Nejran, which flows through the ancient Christian diocese and disappears in the Great Desert, and Wadi Kharîd, which rises on Sanaa plain and loses itself somewhere in the sands of Jauf.

The eastern edge of this great plateau is not clearly defined, but it descends gradually among broken and sterile ranges until it merges into the drifts of the Great Red Desert at an altitude of 3000-4000 feet.

Such are the extreme limits of the vilayet as claimed by Turkey, but Ottoman rule in Yamen has, at present, a much narrower field.

Hardly had Izzet Pasha come to terms with the Imam than the Idrìsi movement of 1912 definitely alienated the province of Asîr.

Sheikh Idrìs, the head of this movement, is the great-grandson of a Moor, a native of Fez, who bore the family name of Idrìsi.

The great-grandfather studied theology at Mecca, where he formed a new *tarikah* or sub-sect of orthodox Sunni. He had two prominent pupils at Mecca toward the close of the eighteenth century: one was the original Senussi and founder of that sect and the other Hassan ibn-Murgân, who established the Murgâni doctrine in the Sudan.

This Idrìsi's son (grandfather of the present Sheikh) is buried at Sabbia—the Asîri capital—while his son is buried in Dongola. The family seems to have travelled about a good deal and all went in for theology. The present Idrìsi commenced his studies at the age of twenty, at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and in 1903 returned to Asîr. He is now about forty, and has the prestige of his house at his back. He was born in Asîr, and has Dongolese and Yameni blood in him on the female side. He is said to be a man of education with some knowledge of English. Sheikh Idrìs has had to use a good many stage tricks to hold the allegiance of the ignorant tribesmen on whom his power depends. I might mention his faked miracle of turning water into blood by means of aniline dye, or his startling changes of make-up (probably procured in Egypt) which enable him to appear before his astonished followers as an old man, a youth, a negro, or even (Allah regard us) a woman.

Nevertheless he is a man of affairs, and overland

pilgrims declare that the roads in Asîr are safer than in Turkish Yamen.

Theologian as he may be, his movement is political and not religious, though he uses the alleged religious laxity of the Turks as a weapon against them. He demands autonomy for Asîr and has hitherto refused anything less ; even the governorship of that province under Turkey, which was offered to him by the present Vali in the spring of 1913.

Italian support gave him more prominence than he could have hoped to attain unassisted, and now that has been withdrawn he may be more amenable to terms, more especially as the Turks have now in operation a maritime blockade of the Asîri coast.

Another tribe that practically repudiates Turkish rule —though far easier to handle than Asîr—is the Dheranik. These tribesmen dwell in the Tihama and maritime hills in the district whose administration centre is Beit al-Fakih,[1] an ancient seat of learning and a town of some 5000 inhabitants, where there is a battalion of Ottoman troops and a Turkish district-governor or Kaimakam.

Some years ago a previous Kaimakam was shot dead at the door of his residence in Beit al-Fakih, by the followers of a Dheranik chief whom he had ordered his gendarmes to arrest. The chief and his followers

[1] Literally 'The house of the Sage' (a local divine named Sayed Ahmed ibn Musa, whose tomb is near that town and known as a shrine of power). There is a legend that a Turkish pasha, imprisoned in a Spanish dungeon and chained to a block of stone, invoked in vain all the saints known to him, finally recalling the name of the Sage. He was at once transferred miraculously to Beit al-Fakih, arriving there in chains with the block of stone attached !

escaped in the confusion, and since then the Dheranik have been out of hand.

They muster 10,000 men, and their paramount chief —Mohamed Yehya Fâshik—has his headquarters at Huseiniya, a village nine miles north of Zabîd.

Zabîd, the ancient capital of the Tihama, is also a garrison town and a centre of administration, with a population of about 8000. It is outside Dheranik limits, but the tribes of the district are also lawless and predatory.

In 1913 it was proposed to march a battalion from Zabîd to Hodeida *via* Beit al-Fakih, but the Dheranik chief refused to let them through except at the prohibitive rate of £T. 1 a head.

They went round through the Reimah hills eventually.

Further south, along the Tihama towards Mokha, there are no Ottoman ports of importance and the country is less disturbed.

The road from Mokha to Taiz is open, or was when I last heard.

Mokha is a dead-alive, mouldering town, whose trade as a port for coffee and hides has been killed by excessive taxation in the past and its proximity to Aden. It is chiefly noted among Anglo-Indian passengers as the only town on the Arabian coast of the Red Sea with an adequate lighthouse. The coffee that bears its name is shipped from Aden or Hodeida.

Taiz is a large, walled town with a feverish climate, tucked away among the hills, at an altitude of 4000 feet or so. The town stands at the foot of the northern slope of Jebal Sabar, a tall hill under extensive cultivation. A steep rock rises within the walls, 300 feet above the houses ; on this is the citadel-fortress of Kahra.

An early 'king' of Taiz, named Ismail Malek, is buried in the town, and a mosque has been reared over his body. No one is allowed now to approach the tomb itself, which has been carefully walled in. The story goes that an importunate beggar—repulsed by the local governor—prayed at this tomb, and received a miraculous document in the dead king's handwriting, duly signed and sealed, ordering the treasury to pay bearer the sum of 200 rials (£20). The authorities felt compelled to meet this posthumous liability, but have taken care to prevent similar incidents for the future.

From Taiz there is some sort of road or caravan-track on to the main plateau to Sanaa *via* Ibb, Yerîm and Dhamar.

Ibb is a walled town on the summit of a hill, and has a population of 4000. At Ibb, the old pilgrim road made by a slave-vizier in the eleventh century A.D., cuts across from the Hadramaut towards the Tihama, to skirt the coastal plain to Mecca.

Yerîm and Dhamar both fell into the hands of the insurgents during the rising of '91. No atrocities were committed, and Turkish fugitives were kindly treated. When I was with the Anglo-Turkish Boundary Commission in 1902, on the frontier near Dthala, Turkish deserters in pseudo-Arab garb passed through frequently *en route* to Aden. Officially, we took no cognizance of them, but privately they were given such assistance as ordinary humanity dictated. All told tales of hospitable treatment by the tribal Arabs, who passed them on from village to village, yet the Imam's followers were already fighting bitterly against the Turks, and Sanaa itself was to fall two years later.

The very life-artery of Ottoman rule in Yamen is the

Hodeida-Sanaa road, and along this line Turkish sovereignty can hold its own.

It drives a wedge of paramount power between turbulent Asîr and the lawless tribes south of Hodeida. It is true that the coastal section of this road is beset by marauders, within an hour's canter of the town, but they only snap at small caravans, and slink wide among the scrub and sand-drifts at the approach of an armed force.

So long as Loheia is adequately held, Hodeida is safe from an Asîri *coup de main*; and, wall-less as she is, and devoid of natural defences, the snarling, southern tribes can hardly 'rush' her across miles of open desert.

Loheia is a small coastal town on the north side of a shallow bay. It can hardly be called a port, as the anchorage is vile and its approach complicated by submerged reefs, but it exports a little coffee and imports grain. It has dhow-traffic with Jeddah, Hodeida and Aden. Water is scarce and brackish, and troops are served first. A battalion is usually posted there and in the fort, on one of the several kopjes at the back of the town, where a small modern gun or two are mounted.

Loheia is in telegraphic communication with Hodeida. With the exception of Loheia, which is used as a base for operations in Asîr, the chain of Turkish dominion in Yamen may be said to run from Hodeida to Sanaa (with Menakha as the padlock), and from Sanaa southwards along the inland plateau through Dhamar, Yerîm and Ibb to Taiz. A pendant of this Ottoman belt runs from Taiz to Moawiya, and thence to Kataba, near the frontier of the Aden Protectorate and within sight of Dthala, the capital of one of our protected chiefs.

Coastwards from Taiz, the rule of Turkey extends to Mokha and along the littoral to the mountain-fortress

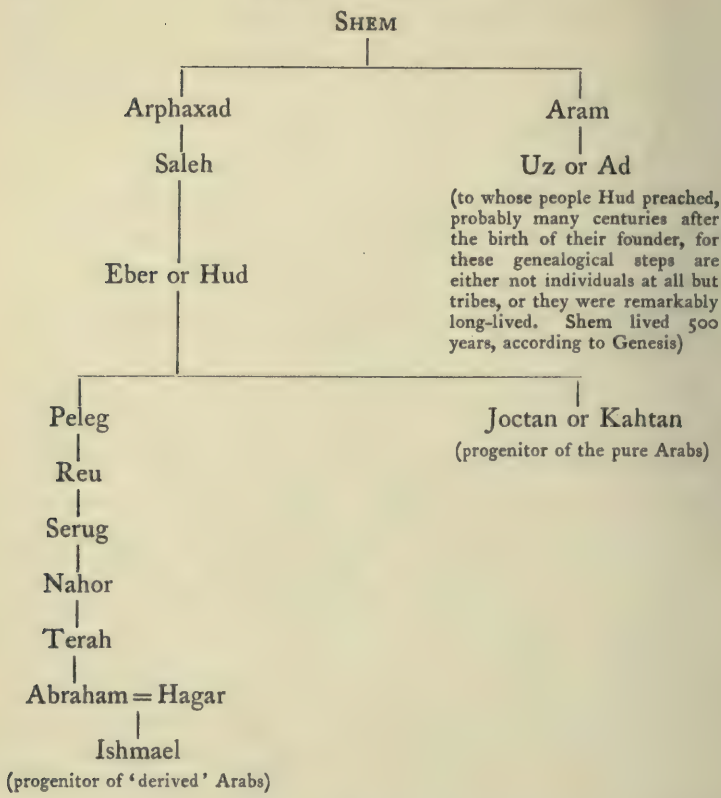
of Sheikh Said, beyond which is the British sphere of nominal influence among the lawless Subaihi. Some Subaihi clans are 'protected' by Turkey, and some by our Aden Government. The weakest part of the chain is between Taiz and Mokha, owing to the broken terrain and tribal unrest, while Zabîd and Beit al-Fakih are the only links between Mokha and Hodeida, which are, however, connected by telegraph.

Such as it is, this is Turkey's girdle of sovereign power in Yamen.

Now let us consider the people with whom she has to deal.

There are two broad and clearly defined Arabian types, both descended from Shem. The better known and more characteristic, from a European point of view, is the stock descended from Ishmael, the tall, bearded, aquiline type, which our crusading forefathers met in the northern part of the Arabian peninsula, and which tourists meet to-day in desert districts, where local taint or sluggish living have not coarsened the breed. This, however, is considered by Arab ethnologists as a 'derived' or impure strain, half Hebrew, as the genealogy on page 28 shows.

The original or 'pure' Arabs are the descendants of Joctan, and these Joctanic Arabs are the indigenous tribes of Yamen. They differ widely from the children of Ishmael, being smaller, darker, and lacking the aquiline features. They have thick heads of hair, often frizzy, while the Ishmaelites' hair is straight or nearly so, yet they are almost beardless, and never have the full beard of the later stock. They resemble the ancient Egyptian type, and authorities agree in referring both to a common stock, from which the Abyssinians are also



derived. The Joctanic type may be seen in its original purity among the remoter hills of the Aden hinterland, but in Yamen it has lost much of its characteristic features, as the Ishmaelite Arabs have immigrated from the north and intermarried with the indigenous stock, while there are also local taints.

The Asîri and Dheranik have already been mentioned: though united by a common bond of outlawry, they differ considerably in appearance and personal characteristics. The Asîri are high-shouldered, frizzy-haired, and almost beardless, of serious and aloof demeanour,



AN ASÎRI.



A DHERANIK TRIBESMAN.

To face page 28.

mistrusting strangers, yet born traders; while the Dheranik tribesman has a crisp, short beard, and keeps his straight hair under a tightly-bound turban. He cares little for trade, so long as his crops, under the maritime range, or his flocks and herds on the Tihama plains, hold good, and his escapades have practically scotched the caravan-borne trade of Beit al-Fakih and Zabîd with Hodeida.

The Imam's influence need not be considered yet; it is widespread, and embraces widely different people in varying degrees.

We are considering general racial types, and cannot do better than commence from the coast and work inland.

Along the Tihama or littoral belt the natives are slightly built, and dark, with a strong negroid taint due to concubinage with female domestic slaves. Once this strain was established the intermarriage of its individuals became regular. Quadroon girls are frequently wedded by Arabs, though no girl of pure Arab stock would be given in marriage to a mulatto, still less to a negro, except to make a much-monied match. Islam boasts of equality among its races, but draws the line at *that*, though manumitted slaves frequently attain positions of wealth and trust. I could mention a case at Hodeida, where a portly slave, who wears with pride the title of Hajji (as a *bona-fide* pilgrim), was appointed executor under the will of his late master. He administers the estate for several minors, and handles with energy and acumen the testator's business as coffee-merchant and broker.

The Arab merchant-class in all the towns of Yamen is chiefly of Ishmaelite type, immigrants of the later stock, tall men, wearing the long robes, usually associ-

ated with Arabs in popular illustrations, while countrymen of every strain wear the short scanty kilt of the Joctanic Arab.

The maritime hills that skirt the Tihama are peopled by an intermediate type, with the swarthy complexion of the plainsman, but lacking the negroid taint, except in towns and large settlements, where the tribal type becomes merged. On the main ranges and great *massifs* of Yamen we find the true mountaineer type, taller and bigger-limbed than the lowlander, and of lighter complexion. In the Aden hinterland the mountaineers are smaller than the plain-dwellers. Beyond those hills, toward the south-western edge of the Great Red Desert, there is again a taller race, with every trace of Ishmaelite immigration, which probably lapped southward from Jauf —skirting the Great Desert along the northern scarp of the South Arabian hills—and invaded the south Arabian littoral through Aden and other ports of the Aden Gulf.

The negroid taint does not occur in the Yamen hills, but there has been intermarriage and concubinage with women of serf strain, whose origin is said to be derived from the Abyssinian or Persian invasion of Yamen, before the dawn of Islam. Be that as it may, this is the menial and mechanical class known throughout Arabia Felix as 'hegur' or 'raya,' in sharp distinction to the indigenous tribal type, though all are Moslems.

In the towns of central Yamen, Jews occur in large numbers, living in their own quarter and noted as craftsmen. Turkish rule has secured them tolerance, for they are recognized as an important economic factor in the development of the country. At Menakha, the best smiths and carpenters are Jews, and they are even allowed to hold garden-land—a striking concession in



ONE OF THE 'HEGÛR.'



YAMEN JEWS.

To face page 30.

Arabia. Still, their's is rather a harried existence and, now that the Islamic code is rigidly enforced and the Imam's influence is to the fore, their position in Yamen may yet be one of jeopardy.

They are not allowed to have schools or synagogues, but they assemble for worship at private houses unmolested, and I was much impressed, on passing a Jew cobbler's shop in a hamlet near Menakha, to see him teaching his children to read the Hebrew Scriptures. I understand that this practice is general; it denotes a laudable standard of education and considerable stiffness of mental fibre in a difficult environment.

After leaving the bare, coastal plains, we find the countrymen of Yamen almost entirely agricultural, but beyond the central plateau, as the terrain begins to merge in the barren hills that border on the Great Desert, the pastoral type becomes again predominant, and agriculture gradually reaches a vanishing point. In such regions the tribesman is of purer strain, and more highly developed in stamina and intelligence than the tribal farmers and small landowners of the Yamen plateau and its fertile mountains. This is easily explained. Patience and perseverance will grow coffee, cabbages and corn in a favourable climate, but it takes brains to follow a shepherd's life, where you must learn to count your charge at a glance and, if one is missing, follow its 'spoor' until you find it. The life too, with its raids and counter-raids, tends to sharpen the wits, and brace muscle and nerve. One must not, of course, compare an indigent Bedouin clan on the outskirts of the desert, with wealthy landowners in the highlands of Yamen, but I maintain that pastoral chiefs on the western edge of the Great Red Desert will compare favourably in wit,

wisdom and personality, with men of the same social grade in Yamen proper.

Turkish rule does not reach far east of Sanaa. The Sharif of Mareb acknowledges Ottoman suzerainty, but his 'cousin,' the Sharif of Behan, owes allegiance to us by treaty, and an intermediate Sharif (also a relation) at Harib is 'odd man out,' unattached to any suzerain. All three Sharifs coquette with either sovereign power when they get a chance.

The present Sharif of Mareb traced me to a hill-camp on the maritime scarp of the central plateau, to ask if I wanted to buy a pedigree pony. He then began to talk a very pungent brand of politics, for which I referred him to his suzerain's representative at Sanaa, pointing out that I was merely a bird-collector, and that the ground was too rough for ponies.

All these dwellers desertward, east of central Yamen, are known collectively as Ahl al-Mashrik (the people of the East), by the Yamenis, who fear their dour fanaticism and fierce impetuous character. The Ahl al-Mashrik may be said to comprise the tribesmen of Nejran and Jauf, with those that range on the south-west corner of the Empty Quarter and acknowledge no authority unless enforced.

They are all Sunnis or orthodox Moslems, regarding the Sunna (a collection of traditions of the Prophet) as canonical, and guiding their conduct thereby.

Central Yamen follows the Zeidi sect (an offshoot of the Shiah schism), called after Zeid, a great grandson of Ali, and established in Yamen by the Imam al-Hadi Yehya in A.D. 901; through him the present Imam of Yamen claims descent from Ali, the fourth Khalif, by his wife Fatima (daughter of the Prophet).

This Zeidi house has been submerged again and again in the stormy sea of Yamen politics.

The Zeidis differ from the main sect of Shiah, in that they hold Ali to be the first rightful Khalif by personal fitness, and not by selection, as the Shiites insist, though both agree in repudiating the first three Khalifs—Abu Bekr, Omar and Othman—whereas the Sunnis acknowledge and respect them as rightfully appointed.

The Zeidis perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. They regard the Shiite pilgrimage to Kerbela—where Ali's son Hussein, with his infant child and retinue, were slaughtered by overwhelming numbers—as a work of supererogation.

They more nearly approach the orthodox Sunni than any other sect of Shiah, and the present Imam was able, by promises of loot, to win the 'People of the East' to his cause against the Sunnite Turk.

There is, however, no love lost between these two great sects in Yamen, and I have been often told by some member of one sect, that a Christian or even a Jew was 'better directed' than any member of the other.

Down on the Tihama the Sunni doctrine is paramount, though at Hodeida a few Zeidis may be found from up-country. The Asîri—whether plainsmen or mountaineers—are Sunni, chiefly of the Shafei sect adhering closely to the Islamic tradition, though they *can* find nothing in that to justify their stern method of circumcision. This is performed after puberty and, besides the actual circumcision, the *pubes* is flayed to prevent hair ever growing there again. All this is said to take place in the presence of the youth's fiancée, and if he flinches she is expected to decline the match.

This painful operation is intended to test the lad's courage and harden him against physical pain.

The creed and ordinary practices of Sunni extend some distance from the coast back into the maritime range. Hajeilah, for example, is Sunni, and slack at that, but up the road to Sanaa from Hajeilah, the Zeidi cult is supreme.

At Menakha there is a strong connection with India, through native merchants and their correspondents, in large centres such as Bombay, Delhi and Haidarabad. This tends to broaden religious thought and to tone down fanaticism. Turkish officials (Sunnis) attend the local mosque, which is naturally of Zeidi denomination. Central Yamen is not fanatical. Her mountaineer husbandmen, in the isolated security of their village eyries, have for many centuries watched the ebb and flow of various creeds and sects. Land must be tilled if kingdoms fall, and seasons do not wait on politics. Religious thought is as strong, and stronger than in the bickering foot-hills or the sun-scorched Tihama, where crops give way to flocks, and both to the upheaval of the moment, or occasional brigandage, or any easier livelihood than that which must be wrested from an iron-bound soil and scanty pasture. The central plateau, with its terraced farms and infinite detail of cultivation, has little time for abstract problems. Thus it is that the ripples of every political and religious movement in Yamen have failed to travel far among those solemn hills, apart from the difficulties of locomotion. Now and then some hot-headed movement has seized on Sanaa, there to brood and feed on its own vitality, unable to spread afield, for the hillsmen will have none of it unless it touches them personally.

Let Sanaa sit in the dust and ashes of Wahabism or flaunt the barbaric vices of a Karmatian despot; the highland tribesmen heed her not, but hold aloof, busied with their own affairs in farm and hamlet and lonely tower, perched among difficult heights where the human voice can carry a day's journey.

Local problems of grave import to these little isolated communities must be thought out and solved. What have they to do with the great outer world so long as the caravan-tracks to market are open, and the tax-collector keeps away?

But let the trend of politics touch their personal interests, and see how those working hives will swarm and sting.

The local mountaineer can scramble across his difficult terrain in any direction, by paths known only to him, while organized troops must move laboriously by some well-known route that winds beneath the menace of those upper peaks, or stray therefrom, to find their progress barred by some impossible precipice.

Such are some of the difficulties that confront Turkish rule in Yamen, nor can it even cope with the turbulent and lawless tribes of the Tihama, for, though locomotion is easier and there is room to wield an organized force on those arid plains, the water supply is a difficult problem, and the climate smites severely the northern-bred troops of Turkey.

As for the province of Asîr, it has usually been left to stew in its own juice. In 1912 there was an attempt to nip the Idrîsi movement, between a mixed column from the Hejaz (operating under a son of the Sharif of Mecca) and two Ottoman field-forces converging from Sanaa and Loheia. These combined operations

failed, chiefly owing to the lack of enterprise shown by the Sharifian column. Since then a permanent field-force has held a series of positions along the Asîri border, from Loheia to Zahrân, on the inland edge of the Tihama, thus safeguarding Hodeida, and preventing a possible juncture of the Asîri with the Dheranik and other lawless tribes southward. The tendency of Ottoman policy is—in spite of sundry alleged successes of the Imam against the Idrìsi—to alienate the Asîri tribes from that chief, as far as possible by diplomacy, and to establish with him a *modus vivendi*, when such defections have brought him to reason. It has always been difficult to hold Yamen Arabs to an abstract ideal for any length of time ; they lack the long-smouldering fervour of spiritual fanaticism, though they can fight like fiends for a concrete object which they can grasp.

None knows this better than the Idrìsi himself. His movement is not religious, but practical. 'Asîr for the Asîri' is the Idrìsi watchword, and even *that* is not enough to hold many of these tribal barbarians, who believe in a downright, bloody fight, crowned with unlimited loot.

They cannot see the force of keeping in the field to maintain their strategic advantage and safeguard their liberties, so the Idrìsi is driven to all sorts of shifts and expedients to enhance his personality and hold tribal interest.

Even the more ascetic eastern tribes that border on the Great Red Desert follow the lure of loot. When they invaded Yamen in the name of the Imam, during previous risings, it was very difficult to keep them in the field, for if the loot did not come up to their expectations, they told the Imam (who should have been their

spiritual and temporal guide) exactly what they thought of him. When any clan or tribal unit had made a good haul of cattle or what not, it usually cleared off home with it, on the same principle that induces a successful gambler at Monte Carlo to leave the tables and take the next train.

The Imam's present position in Yamen is—to say the least of it—curious.

Yehya ibn Mohamed ibn Yehya ibn Hamed ed-Dîn (to give him his full name and patronymics) must practise the art of political balancing to a nicety, or there is much trouble ahead for him.

When Turkish neglect and contumely drove his father, Mohamed ibn Yehya, out of Sanaa, late last century, tribesmen rallied to him, as a persecuted leader of Islam, at Kaflet Adhar, on the eastern border of northern Yamen.

Since then the present Imam has been able to establish himself in Central Yamen, at his capital Khamîr, and in his name the tribes have always been ready to have a slap at the Ottoman Government.

But now that the Turks, by a stroke of policy, have recognized him as Imam, and placed in his hands the supreme control and administration of the Islamic code, which is now the law throughout Yamen, he is in a somewhat difficult position.

First and foremost he is no longer a prince in exile, whose misfortunes and romantic lineage could appeal to firebrands of both the great Moslem creeds. He is now arrayed on the side of a constituted authority, which has never been too welcome in Yamen.

The Asîri will never forget that he used Turkish battalions against them in his efforts to subdue them,

and the eastern tribes who fought for him and his father have long since dissipated the loot they got then, and only remember their dead on the grim slopes of Menakha. As for the inhabitants of central Yamen, they are already finding the Sheria or Islamic code a burden, and connect his name with it, for the Imam stipulated, as one of the terms of peace after the rising of 1911, that Yamen should be administered under the Sheria, and not under the Kânûn or Ottoman judicial code as heretofore. He was no doubt influenced to make this proviso by the more fanatical tribes who support him in the north and east, and, as spiritual director and descendant of Ali, he probably felt bound to make a firm stand against Turkish laxity on many points of Moslem practice.

Be this as it may, he has now to play a double game, for he poses as an ascetic before the watchful eyes of his tribal *entourage*, and yet he must accept the support of Ottoman troops at Khamîr. These, in spite of stringent instructions from the central authority at Sanaa, are bound to shock the antiquated tribal notion of Islam at every turn. The mere fact of their wearing trousers of European uniform cut is considered immoral.

When the firman, proclaiming the Imam's sway and alliance with Turkey, was read at Sanaa in September, 1913, the city received the news with great rejoicing ; and Arab hooligans pervaded her streets, discharging fire-arms and shouting that Turkish dominion was over, and that Arab rule was again to flourish.

A wave of spurious patriotism swept over the Arab quarter, but I fancy that now even the Zeidi population are beginning to see that they are like Aesop's frogs, who derided King Log and were given King Stork. The Kânûn, or legal code of the Turks, is a broad and well-

considered judicial scheme, drawn up to meet the requirements of modern Moslem life. Properly administered, it suited Yamen well, and in recent years it *has* been so administered.

The Islamic code, on the other hand, was promulgated for the narrow needs of tribal life, more than a thousand years ago. In its unmodified form it is certainly not suited to the needs of any community above the standard of mere barbarism.

Yet the Imam is pledged to that code, and nominates the *kadis* who administer it. Already central Yamen is crying out against the Sheria, likening it to a mountain —a magnificent monument of past ages, but a terrible and overwhelming disaster to those on whom it falls, without discrimination or allowance for the circumstances of the case. It is as rugged as the people for whom it was originally fashioned, and does not suit the easy-going Yamenis of to-day.

That is not the Turks' affair; they were asked for the reinstatement of the Sheria, and they complied, though they rightly insisted that no Turk, civil or military, should come under its harsh clauses, and Arab gendarmerie—as enlisted men—may choose between Kânûn and Sheria when they have a case toward, but must abide by the decision made.

Such is the vilayet at present. Turkey may be said to hold the Hodeida-Sanaa road, and a strip of country on either side of it, broad where her posts occur, and narrowing between them to a mere thread of sovereignty, indicated by the field-telegraph that links up Sanaa with Stamboul.

In Sanaa itself, Turkish prestige is lower than it has been for many years, but the Turks hold the city and its

outlying defences, while the *rapprochement* with the Imam has relieved tension in that direction. Ottoman sway holds good to Amran; north of that town the Imam is supreme, backed by a supporting column of Ottoman troops and guns.

On the Imam's western border are the Hashidi, a strong, turbulent tribe, mustering 12,000 men, with Asîri sympathies. They have been keeping the Imam's supporting column fairly busy during the summer of 1913. The Turks have still some hold on the central plateau, along a line south of Sanaa, through Dhamar, Yerîm and Ibb to Taiz, and are fairly strong in the south from Taiz to Moawiya, and thence to Kataba—their frontier post—near the border of the Aden Protectorate. Communications between Taiz and Sanaa, and Taiz and Mokha, are none too sure, and if Taiz goes, Moawiya and Kataba go with it.

The whole of the Tihama, except the garrison towns and their immediate neighbourhood, is out of hand. The *entente* with the Imam was a sound stroke of temporary policy to relieve the immediate exigencies of the military situation, but there is no saying how long the Imam's influence may last, or what fresh firebrand may arise, and where. The Idrîsi has been able to disorganize the whole vilayet, and has yet to be dealt with. Imam and Turk, separately and combined, tried and failed to come to terms with him last year.

To crown all, the Ottoman administration in Yamen is desperately hard-up for cash or credit, and the pay of all departments is heavily in arrears.



EASTWARD FROM HODEIDA.

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CHAPTER III

ON AND OFF THE ROAD

THERE is but one road in Yamen worthy of the name, and that is the route connecting the chief port Hodeida with Sanaa, the inland capital.

The distance is some hundred and fifty miles, and takes a week to travel, the road going up from sea-level to well over 9000 feet, and down again to 7200 feet, traversing every variety of terrain known to Arabia.

The caravan-track runs eastward from Hodeida across the maritime plain, known through half Arabia as the Tihama, or abode of heat. Across this grim stretch of desert and scrub and parched mimosa even natives travel by night, if possible, for the sun smites like a sword, and there is little water and less shade.

The small town of Bajil, at the entrance to the foot-hills, is the limit of the actual desert. It is thirty-two miles from Hodeida and 600 feet above sea-level. There is a half-way caravansary between Bajil and Hodeida, known as Tannan—a mere collection of empty huts for the use of travellers—where one may get coffee and brackish water.

Beyond Bajil are broad, level plains of arable land and bush, girt by foot-hills, and stiflingly hot by day.

Leaving Bajil, through miles of red millet and sesame, the road circles round behind a long, isolated range, which culminates in Mount Bura at 5000 feet. Through a gap in this range the Siham flows at gloomy depths toward the sea.

Bura block can be plainly seen from Hodeida on a clear day, and would be a delightful sanatorium for that sweltering, sun-scorched town ; there are mountain rills and breezy forest uplands, where a man might sit in a deck-chair and watch Hodeida stewing in the distant haze. The Sheikh of Bura is a kindly old soul who loves visitors and gossip ; he has guest-quarters, fitted with real French bedsteads of fancy ironwork.

Unfortunately, the road to Bura from Hodeida is impracticable just now, owing to the lawless state of the maritime tribes and, in any case, the last few hours up to that hospitable eyrie must be tackled on foot. The main road from Bajil runs through the village of Beha, twelve miles on, a useful halting-place on the long thirty-mile march to Hajeilah. There are one or two zarebas and thatched sheds for travellers. Beha is usually a night halt, and muleteers like to get away again soon after midnight, to make Hajeilah before the sun gets hot.

After a few hours' doze on a wooden charpoy, laced with palm-cord, the sleepy wayfarer climbs onto a sullen mule, and leads his creaking baggage-train through Beha's only street, out onto a vast, open plain of sun-baked earth and scanty fallow.

This is the last stage of the journey that may be done by night, and is rather monotonous if there is no moon. On the right, at infinite distance, are the twinkling lights of lonely villages on Bura and, far away to the left

across the plain, a cock will occasionally crow in a tentative sort of way, as if to hurry up the dawn.

The morning star swings up ahead, and a light, chilly breeze makes the mounted escort cough distressfully until cigarettes are handed round.

Dawn should see you clear of the plain, and while the morning is still grey you may hear the rapping shots of some tribal *fracas* from the foot-hills, a cheery sound, denoting that the world is once more astir and taking an intelligent interest in its affairs. There are two deep ravines to cross, and then you reach the village of Obal, where you can get a cup of coffee, and send a mounted gendarme on to Hajeilah with a polite note in Arabic to the Mudir, which will ensure you quarters and the usual courtesy.

The road now traverses densely-wooded ravines, and emerges onto open park-like country, well cultivated, and dotted with tall timber—the farmland of Hajeilah.

Hajeilah stands on a rugged spur, overlooking the valley of Hejjan, that drains the upper heights.

The traveller will find good quarters in a low, rambling shed of loose stone, fronted by a spacious zareba that overlooks the Arab cemetery on the south-west outskirts of the township. The management is less piratical than that of adjacent caravansaries, and the view is magnificent.

Beyond Hajeilah, eastward, the ground sweeps boldly up to the crest of Safaan, etched with towers and villages on the skyline, 5000 feet up and barely five miles away. Further back, to the right, is Masar's bluff headland, a narrow, rocky plateau on which a big perimeter fort sprawls out like a star-fish. Still further to the right is the tall peak of Shibam that guards Menakha.

The route to Menakha lies over the razor-backed ridge on the skyline between Masar and Shibam, barely ten miles as an aeroplane flies, but nearly thrice that distance by road. If the traveller is stopping for any length of time at Hajeilah, he will find better quarters in the town than a coffee-house zareba affords, with its influx of clamorous wayfarers. I can recommend the house of an old coffee-broker just below the 'Ambah,' or Turkish defensible post, which holds a small detachment of Ottoman infantry.

There is a stone tower with a store-room and outhouse below, and a courtyard and guest-chamber above, reached by a flight of ruinous steps that give onto a coffee-drying platform, where taxidermical specimens may be aired if guarded closely from hovering kites. Below are stone sheds, where your guard may be quartered and your cooking done. The guest-chamber is quite stylish, and boasts a tiny rose-window of stained glass. The mud walls are frescoed with circular arabesques in dull red and ochre, while the small unglazed casements are fitted with practicable shutters to keep out sun and driving rain. A gap or two in the mud and wattle flooring enable you to keep an eye on your stores below.

If you should be there just before the commencement of the rainy season, be sure that the roof is seen to, for white ants tunnel everywhere, and the first big thunderstorm last year brought most of the ceiling down in seas of liquid mud.

The only real drawback to a nervous man is the proximity of several well-stocked hives—a pile of hollow logs that divided the courtyard in two, and behind which I used to have my bath. The bees were usually good-tempered, except when my landlord had just robbed

them to put honeycomb on my breakfast-table. Then they would occasionally inflict reprisals on me, and no one's dignity will stand the strain of a damp and undraped stampede, nor is a brandished bath towel an adequate defence.

The traveller should lose no time in calling at the 'Hukoomah,' or seat of Government, on the local Mudir, who will receive him in a stockaded enclosure, where a stone hut or two and some thatched sheds form the Mudirat.

A small escort will be told off to the traveller, who is then free of the district, within certain limits, which depend on the political aspect of the moment.

You will probably be offered as many 'soldiers' or Arab gendarmes as you want, but you should not take this courteous offer *au pied de lettre*. Four is a useful number (one being the umbashi or corporal in charge); two can attend your walks abroad and two stop at home to cook and look after the quarters, or make themselves useful up at the Mudirat which overlooks your back-yard. There are but six gendarmes in the settlement as a rule; their sphere of duty is wide and their pay heavily in arrears. There is a tendency to shirk official duty, which you should do your best to check.

The Yamen gendarme is usually a sportsman, and likes to see birds killed on the wing, but his woodcraft is not good. Your best beat is across the broad, open valley of the Hejjan, four miles southward. Here there is a grove of tall timber and undergrowth in a fold of foot-hills that run up to Mount Lahab—a tentacle of the Shibam *massif*. Among those trees you will find most of the bird-life of the district, provided that you do not let the escort follow you too closely. The black-

avised birds-nesting eagle spends the night there, and you may flush a stray hammer-head crane from some chance rain-pool.

Guinea-fowl are there before the sun gets hot, and give a better chance than out in the open. A faint note like the muffled prelude of a lawn-mower will give you your direction, and if you move quickly through the dew-drenched, aromatic bush, the bevy may rise and give you a quick chance between the tree-tops. If they hear you they will run before you all morning, elusive and invisible.

The slopes of Lahab's scarp are off your beat, but its mountain-folk are a pleasant, good-tempered lot, and there is no reason why you should not visit them if you make the necessary arrangements with officialdom. There is no Ottoman representative up there—you must apply to the central administration at Menakha for permission and an escort.

There is little of special interest to detain the naturalist at Hajeilah, and the climate is rather trying, for the town is only 2000 feet above sea-level.

The population of town and district has a name for lawless truculence ; folk are warned not to move about after dark, and nocturnal fusillades at the landscape in general are not uncommon when thieves are thought to be about.

I found the natives friendly enough, though rather a nuisance at times, when I was busy, as both sexes brought their varied ailments to me, some of a distinctly embarrassing nature.

They quarrel a good deal among themselves, and their women talk too much, sometimes degenerating into scolds. Both sexes are addicted to the 'kat-habit,'



THE CALL TO PRAYER AT HAJEILAH.



THE ROAD TO MENAKHA ATHWART THE SPURS OF SHIBAM (p. 53).

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which I shall describe later. This, with the unhealthy climate of the district, shut in between those foot-hills and afflicted with either floods or drought, as the year goes round, accounts for much of its rancorous reputation. The inadequate local administration explains the general lawlessness.

Religion too, is not at its best here: the people are Sunnis—orthodox enough in dogma, but in practice very slack. The call to prayer was given from a deserted 'minbar' or pulpit just outside my quarters, and I have heard the local mullah inveigh from there, at the populace below him in the crowded bazaar, for scanty attendance at divine worship—and on Friday too!

There is a great deal of sickness about, especially after the rainy season has set in, bringing malaria with it. Turkish troops hate Hajeilah as a station and seldom keep well there. When I first went up-country I had an Ottoman escort from here, and all except a bandsman —whose sole weapon of offence was a flageolet—were invalids sent up to recuperate at Menakha.

The road up from Hajeilah is rather a trying march, the actual distance to Menakha being twenty-six miles, and the difference in level 5000 feet.

The first stage of the journey should be commenced well before dawn, for it lies up the Hejjan gorge, which the morning sun makes an inferno.

The road runs eastward across Hajeilah plateau and down the southern scarp into the Hejjan valley, following up the bed of a deep ravine much impeded by boulders. The sides of this ravine close in and get steeper, higher and better wooded as the traveller proceeds.

About six miles from Hajeilah is the 'Gate of the

Mountains,' formed by a rock the size of a large house which has fallen from above, across the ravine, and made a natural arch above the track.

Three miles beyond the 'Gate' the track leaves the bed of the Hejjan and zigzags a thousand feet up to Wasil. The ravine itself gets steeper and more encumbered with boulders toward its source, high up between the heights of Safaan and Masar.

Wasil is a collection of stone huts for travellers, some market-booths, which are occupied on Saturdays, and a small hamlet of tall towers dominated by the local chief's stronghold, with loopholes and pinnacles picked out in white.

The settlement stands 4200 feet above sea-level, on a lofty spur that runs down from the commanding heights of Masar and divides the Hejjan from its tributary, the Howeib.

To the traveller from the coast, Wasil gives the first typical view of the Yamen highlands. Far below, to the west, stretch the foot-hills toward Hajeilah and tawny plains, half veiled in violet haze, beyond which rise the rugged heights of Bura against a pale, hot sky.

From the coffee-house at Wasil one can throw a stone into Wadi Hejjan, where caravan-donkeys look the size of mice, and sheer from the Hejjan, blocking out the northern sky, rises the gigantic scarp of Safaan. Along its upper heights are terraced fields and guardian towers, with here and there a village perched on some salient crag. So abrupt is that stupendous slope that it looks as if an incautious husbandman might fall off his field, to crash into the Hejjan thousands of feet below.

Close at hand are the precipitous heights of Masar, that seem ready to fall on Wasil. It gives one a crick

in the neck to count the coffee-gardens up those outrageous steeps, while wondering if they are garnered with a derrick. Further round, in the eye of the morning sun, is Shibam peak, throwing great arms out to grasp Masar and Lahab. The long crests of the Lahab range lie across the southern sky, beyond nightmare gorges that drain into the Howeib.

Wasil district is a chaos of spurs and ravines that droop steeply down from the upper heights of Masar, to plunge sheer, a thousand feet or so, into some lowland gorge. Here are tall towers perched on dizzy pinnacles and overhung by amazing scarps, where the eagle nests and no human foot can climb. Ravines too, so steep and narrow that one may almost touch the tree-tops which grow out of them, and so overgrown that only a green twilight penetrates to their recesses, where the lurid blooms of the snake-onion flame among the fern and the giant cobra drowses in the hush of noon.

Among the spurs are breezy uplands, where the hill-grass bends before the wind and the peregrine hurtles like a shell as he swoops down to startle basking conies on the lower ledges. Cunning folks are these, with their rat-like faces and rabbit ways, never straying far from some deep, rocky cleft in which to hurl themselves headlong at the rush of questing wings or the flash of a rifle.

Spurs and ravines alike are terraced for coffee, wherever coffee will grow, and in the spring the star-like coffee-flower, in wax-like clusters, loads the air with its sweet, mystic scent.

Some of these ravines hold perennial water. All begin in wooded clefts high up on Masar, and all end in thick jungle and a plunge over the rocky lip of a precipice.

The local people are like their district—rugged and a trifle dangerous to strangers, but kindly and full of charm to those who take the trouble to know them.

I stayed some time near Wasil: my host was a quiet and courteous chief who lived in a lonely tower on the edge of a great ravine. He liked quietness, but loved an evening's gossip when the owls were hunting down the ravine and conies chattered softly up the hill.

Our talk ran on men and matters of import, and he would tell how the last great rising flared up along the heights of Menakha because a woman, bereft of her two sons by murder and seeking vengeance in vain from the Ottoman Government, drove a dog on a hempen lead before her through the upper villages. "Are ye men or dogs," quoth she: "will ye fight now for your Imam or hang later when the reckoning comes?" And the gathering storm of revolt that menaced Sanaa burst round Menakha in the name of the Imam.

Upon the heights of Masar, the Ottoman fort, all ringed with foes, was held in the Sultan's name by a section of raw Turkish recruits and some Arab gendarmerie.

Hajeilah ruffians decided that an era of free loot was close at hand, and started up the road to harry the homesteads of Wasil. They kept clear of the main village, as too hard a nut to crack, but invested my host's lonely tower, and called on him to let them in as Turkish rule was over.

He replied with a well-sustained rifle-fire which drove the marauders to cover, with two casualties, and they eventually abandoned their project.

"Fighting," exclaimed my host, "they know not what fighting *is*—those Hajeilah men—but Izzet Pasha

could have taught them when his advance-guard drove the tribesmen before it, up this road, in a thick mist, and the yells of stricken men rose high above the babble of his guns."

Masar fort stood staunch, in spite of proffered terms for its surrender, and well it was for that relieving column that it did so. "Yes of course the Arab gendarmerie stood fast by the Osmalis," remarked my host. "The Turks are an infliction of Allah, but the Imam is worse. *We* only ask for peace and quietness."

Poor man, I hope he has his wish; he died last year.

Up from Wasil village the road winds steeply athwart the giant spurs of Masar, menaced by its precipitous scarp that looms high above the jasmine-fringed slopes on the left.

On the right the ground drops steeply down to the ravines of Wasil, with terraces of tall coffee built in along its contours. Ahead, high up against the skyline, is Attara, once the dominant stronghold of these parts,[1] but now a mere cluster of towers occupied by a few husbandmen and their families. Up to Attara crest the track climbs in steep, well-buttressed zigzags, winding through the little hamlet and round the rocky pinnacle which once held the right-of-way when mountain-batteries were not.

Looking down from the heights of Attara, into its vast ravine that drops dizzily towards the gorge of the Howeib, one may trace the half-obliterated track of the old Arab road that left the Howeib valley, near its junction with the Hejjan, and wound up the outrageous

[1] When it was held by a Nejrani chief comparatively independent of the Imam. The Turks ousted him, but Nejranis still hold land in the district.

slope of the ravine to join the present road to Attara.

All the way up from the Hejjan, the Government road is well traced and deeply cut into the mighty flank of Masar—a monument of Turkish zeal and enterprise, just as its abominably neglected surface is a standing rebuke to official apathy.

Attara is about five miles from Wasil by road, and takes two hours to reach as mules climb. Beyond this point the route skirts the head of Attara ravine: here is a pleasant little valley, thick with barley and lucerne and watered by a perennial brook.

Crossing this brook the road rapidly degenerates to a mere boulder-strewn track and climbs steeply, in well traced zigzags, up onto the wind-swept plateau of bare rock and rubble that rises gently towards Hajrah pass. Here the route, free of storm-washed débris, once again assumes the aspect of a made road. Close on the left, on a knoll commanding the road, is Hajrah—a big, walled village of tall towers, well built and opulent, for here reside many tribal merchants of note and the Kadi of Menakha; a haughty and stiff-necked settlement that essayed to bar the passage of Izzet Pasha's column early in 1911, until a shell or two reduced it to quaking silence lest its trim towers should topple down the knoll.

Hajrah pass lies over a linked tentacle of Masar and Shibam: both heights dominate the bare plateau, from which the white fort, tucked into the topmost pinnacle of Shibam, can be plainly seen when mountain mists or low-hung clouds have not veiled the upper air.

From the top of the pass Menakha may be sighted under a double-humped hill on which are the twin guardian forts of Beh and Hadar.



HAJRAH.

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Here the road leaves its general easterly trend, to slope sharply southward into a bay between two spurs of Shibam. Thence to Menakha there is a fairly good road, well scarped and revetted, across successive spurs and ravines.

High on the right are the soaring peaks of that great *massif*, and on the left its giant limbs thrust down to depths unscaleable—ravines that the road spans on tall stone culverts near their source, but which sweep down, vast and impassable, to drop sheer into the pleasant valley of Shebt, 3000 feet below.

On every accessible spot that is capable of cultivation, one looks down on dark-green coffee or garden-ground, with here and there a grove of walnut. An occasional blackberry bush grows along the edge of the precipitous road-scarp: there is quite a home-like tang about its tartish fruit, though one would not expect to be eating blackberries when the dog-rose is in bloom, which was the case here when I first went up the road in December. The 'homish' feel of the district was much enhanced by the weather: it was so foggy that I could not see Menakha till we stumbled up its main street, though we had heard, an hour ago, the cry of Ottoman bugles through the mist.

Menakha is 7500 feet above sea-level and stands on a steep ridge formed by an arm that stretches steeply down from an offshoot of Shibam, and rises in two giant knuckles, on which are the forts of Hadar and Beh. The town is perched on the 'wrist,' and beyond its southern outskirts, up the rise leading to the crest of Beh, is the suburb of Little Menakha, a cluster of lofty towers where well-to-do merchants dwell.

Fort Beh overlooks and completely commands the

Sanaa road (winding up the lower limbs of Shibam) across a vast ravine that a baboon could not scale. Down this the telegraph-line stretches in long, sagging loops, the wire having been taken to the edge of the chasm, under the headland of Beh, and dropped sheer into the gulf, to be handled by Turkish sappers from below.

Fort Hadar commands the other approaches to Menakha—mere goat-tracks, winding up from the valley of Shebt—and both forts dominate the town, which is almost overhung by the heights of Shibam, where there are also several armed posts. Beh is the gun-fort ; it is there that a hulking howitzer broods in a circular nest of masonry, just peering clear of the edge down at the mountain-road and distant foot-hills eastward. Fear of that monstrous prodigy (dragged piecemeal from the coast) did much to keep Menakha inviolate in 1904-1905, when Sanaa fell and the Imam's followers, joined by outlawed hillsmen, were seething round the ridge to wrest the key of Yamen from the Turks.

The insurgents shunned the open curves of the mountain-road as mere shambles under the Ottoman guns, and, after vain attempts to scale the vast ravines that run down on either hand from Menakha ridge, came swarming up the spurs, with the driving mist, to try conclusions with the forces of the Sultan. The local gendarmerie did yeoman service, then and on subsequent occasions, for they knew every inch of the ground and fought to guard their lives and homes. Short shrift would they and their's have had from their compatriots if Menakha had fallen. Night and day, in fog or sunshine, they grappled with their foes among the treacherous boulders of the upper heights, while above

them, dogged and watchful to strike as occasion served, the Turks held on to the ridge with all the stubborn courage of their race. For weeks the garrison never knew what it was to have a peaceful night, for when the mountain mist crept up at the gathering twilight the enemy came with it, and stabbed the gloom with rifle-fire that seemed to come from all directions.

It is curious to note that the villagers of the upper heights, and even those who lived below Menakha, on the main spurs of Shibam, remained loyal to their liege-lord the Sultan. But all the tribesmen, whose towers and villages lie low down the ravines, were up in arms against the Turk, as were also the lawless denizens of the foot-hills Sanaa-wards, who made common cause with the Imam for the sake of loot.

In fact, the main *massif* of Shibam stood firm for Turkish rule, while all the surrounding country was seething with revolt.

The same thing happened in 1910, when the Imam's men swarmed over the heights of Masar, and even Hajrah village had declared in favour of the rising.

Yet Turkey has always held her own at Menakha since the ill-starred rising of '91, and well it is for her that she has, for, if Menakha fell, her rule in Yamen would be over. Every post and garrison throughout the vilayet would be stormed or compelled to capitulate for lack of support, leaving her the barren occupation of a few littoral towns.

Menakha can well stand a siege, even when the road is closed and the country up in arms, for fat crops and fertile gardens overhang the precipices that guard her, and orchards, in fields of fodder, grow up the slopes of Shibam above the town.

A year's provisions are supposed to be kept up at the fort on Shibam peak, and there is no lack of water. To occupy Menakha, without dealing with the Shibam positions, would be to risk a death-trap of shattered masonry, though Forts Hadar and Beh are the real strength of the place. Their deceptively easy scarps can be swept with the fire of Nordenfeldts and machine-guns.

Menakha is naturally strong, and could be made much stronger. It is the Gibraltar of Yamen.

The town itself is composed chiefly of stone towers, clustered on either side of the ridge, along whose crest are the principal buildings. The Military Hospital is at the upper end of the town, where the spur rises sharply towards Shibam; half-way down the crest are the barracks and magazine, tall, oblong buildings, cheek by jowl, that dominate the town. Tucked close under the barracks, on the western face of the ridge, are officers' quarters, and the brigade-office for the district. The road from Wasil runs up a gentle rise, past these and other buildings, turning sharply round to the right, between the Hukoomah and the Post Office, onto the crest of the spur at its lowest point. Here the mosque and 'hotel' face each other across the road which, still curving to the right, descends southwards athwart the other face of the ridge to quarter the vast easterly spurs of Shibam, after making a hairpin curve round Menakha.

The town owes its striking appearance more to its position than any noteworthy architecture. Government buildings are substantial but not elegant; the Hukoomah, or centre of administration, is perhaps the best, in massive grey stone, with well-cut casements, standing four-square at the bend of the road.



THE GIBRALTAR OF YAMEN.



VIEW FROM THE HOTEL AT MENAKHA LOOKING SOUTHWARD ACROSS AN OUTER COURT OF THE MOSQUE TO THE BARRACKS, WITH THE HEIGHTS OF SHIBAM IN THE BACKGROUND.

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The post-office and hotel are box-like, two-storey tenements, adjoining each other on the edge of the town ; the mosque is the usual whitewashed edifice with a squat minaret of mediaeval Arab type. It is said to be the oldest building in the place—a 'wakf' or charitable trust of an ancient bequest. Water was laid on to it by a covered conduit from a ravine of Shibam, which now supplies the hospital and magazine as well. This supply has not been improved since the Turkish occupation ; it is more than adequate when thunder-storms play round Shibam and a heavy spate comes foaming down the rocky ridge, but in the winter-drought it is apt to run short. There are, however, perennial springs on either side of the town, well-commanded and easy of access.

I cannot say much for the hotel, except that it is much cleaner and far less verminous than it was, being now kept by an Arab instead of a bibulous Greek. Its chief advantage is its proximity to the Post Office, which enables the alien guest to keep an eye on the up-country mails or to step round and have a heart-to-heart talk with the Postmaster (who is also the telegraph operator), when wires come through in mutilated Arabic. As for the mail itself, it is best described as elusive. Christmas may be at hand, and the weekly up-country mail is often so late that it overlaps the week after, until you have given up all hope and feel that you are cut off from kith and kin—a stranger in a strange land—and then some raw, foggy night, long after the Turkish trumpet up at Beh has sounded 'lights out,' you may hear the faint tinkle of mule-bells, for the mail must travel day and night to link up Sanaa with the Porte. Next morning the leather post-bags will be lying out in the rocky street

to await the convenience of the postal staff, which will turn up when the sun has warmed the air a bit. Then you may go round and help sort—courtesy and expediency alike dictate it—as you will probably be the only man in the neighbourhood who uses Roman characters, though all will be interested in your Christian numbers.

Menakha is headquarters for a battalion of Turkish infantry, which garrisons the various posts in the district. There is also a detachment of artillery to handle the guns up at Beh and other positions. A company of Zaptieh or Arab gendarmerie—with a few mounted men of the same service—take turns for duty at the Hukoomah, keep order in the bazaar, assist the collection of taxes, escort travellers, help to garrison outlying posts, and make themselves generally useful.

The town has a civil population of about 8000, of whom at least a thousand are Jews, the only skilled craftsmen of the place—jewellers, smiths and carpenters.

A Kaimakam or civil governor administers town and district; the latter extends from Hajeilah to Sôk al-Khamîs, the next stage on the route to Sanaa.

From Menakha the road slopes southward down the eastern edge of the town, past a Greek shop where one could buy British biscuits, French soap and Turkish tobacco, and other luxuries too numerous to specify. The proprietor, an honest, obliging soul, has since been compelled, by the prevalent commercial slump, to withdraw to the coast.

Once back under the slopes of Shibam the route resumes its easterly trend, winding downward round spur after spur, as it skirts the awesome ravine that cuts off Menakha from the lawless foot-hills below.

The road is well buttressed and carried over several



UNDER THE SLOPES OF SHIBAM.



FROM MENAKHA THE ROAD SLOPES SOUTHWARD DOWN THE EASTERN EDGE OF THE TOWN.

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AMONG THE KOPJES.



'SHOPS' AT SOK AL-KHAMÎS.

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fine culverts, but its surface is positively wicked. There used to be a detachment of sappers encamped near this section, at least they were said to be sappers and had some sapper tools, but I never saw them 'sap.' The difficulty may have been to know where to start, the whole of this road-section is so bad ; anyhow they gave it up and have gone back home to Stamboul.

It is nearly 4000 feet and two hours' journey from Menakha down to where the torrent-torn mountain-road crawls out from the rocky claws of Shibam, and winds through a chaos of kopjes toward the long, wall-like ranges that line the eastern sky and form the maritime scarp of the main inland plateau. High up on this scarp is Sôk al-Khamîs.

This is a hot and tiresome march under any conditions. The best way is to start from Menakha in the small hours, if there is moon enough to keep you from breaking your neck on the road down. In any case, daylight should find you among the kopjes, for the local authorities discourage night journeys along that lawless stretch, where even the Ottoman mail is occasionally waylaid, and straggling soldiers have been shot for the sake of their rifles.

The distance between Menakha and Sôk al-Khamîs is thirty miles. The road, after leaving the millet crops between the straggling spurs of Shibam, winds through natural pasture and well-wooded gullies to Idz—one of the several armed posts that guard this section of the route. High on a tall kopje to the left of the road is the Ottoman stronghold of Idz, and close on the right is Idz village—a mere walled hamlet where there is a caravansary for travellers. An hour or so is usually spent here to break this long stage ; coffee and native

bread are procurable, also water and fodder for animals. Idz is two hours' march from the foot of Shibam heights.

Beyond Idz the road traverses numerous defiles between rugged kopjes fringed with bush, entering more open country as it approaches the foot-hills of the main range.

An hour from Idz the track passes through a deep, narrow gully for twenty minutes—an awkward spot when the district is disturbed, as thick bush and overhanging rocks afford ideal cover for a tribal ambush. Beyond this gully the foot-hills of the main range commence, and between them the camel-road branches off to the right toward the great valley of Siham, which it traverses down to the Tihama, thus avoiding Menakha ridge. Surmounting a rocky spur beset with venomous thickets of fiercely-armed euphorbia, the road descends into an amphitheatre between rocky hills, in the centre of which is the important fortress of Mefhak, on the crest of a steep, tall kopje to the right of the road, and completely commanding it as it winds round the inner spurs of the encircling hills. On one of these spurs, above the road to the left, is the little village of Mefhak, and there is a caravansary for travellers and a well below the village on either side of the track. Mefhak fort is held by a small detachment of Ottoman troops and looks a hard nut to crack, for the only approach is up a steep zigzag which could be swept from above. It had to capitulate after the fall of Sanaa in 1904, being closely beleaguered without hope of relief from Menakha.

After Mefhak the road tackles the steeply rising foothills in earnest, sweeping round one craggy shoulder after another in an ever-increasing gradient that culminates in a really strenuous climb up past a tiny hamlet

and mosque, at the head of a deep coffee-clad ravine to the right.

The road now climbs onto the barren, wind-swept spur of Sôk al-Khamîs, a tentacle of the main range thrust down towards Mefhak, with a deep valley on either hand trending south-west. The larger of these lies west of the spur ; in it is most of the cultivation in the district and the local water-supply—great terraces of corn, with here and there a well marked by the wild fig.

On a rocky ledge overhanging this valley is Sôk al-Khamîs, a walled village of crude stone houses and Arab shops. At its southern angle is a military hospital, of well-dressed masonry, adjoining stores and quarters for a company of Nizam or Ottoman regulars. Facing these is the Commandant's residence, the only sizeable house in the place. There is also a Post and Telegraph Office and a collection of squalid stone shanties that serves as the local Hukoomah. There is a caravansary —one or two stone huts at the back of the commandant's house, overlooking the drop into the valley. Here, too, are the married quarters for the various subaltern-officers and the Chaplain or Khojah : the medical officer has a rugged little house just outside the post, up the road which rises steeply along the eastern face of the village. He spent most of his time in a neat little dispensary, where a visitor might be sure of getting a good cup of coffee, and would be shown with pride over the small, well-ordered hospital and the little patch of garden, where vegetables were grown to combat scurvy.

The 'proper front' of the village is presumably south, looking down the spur, for on the southern face is an emplacement for a small gun, and here, too, is the main-guard and camping ground for additional troops.

It was about two hundred yards down this spur, and well under the moral protection of that little gun and the military element of the post, that I was allowed—after some demur—to pitch our modest camp. I can recommend the spot; a bit of fallow perched on a stone terrace at the edge of the upper spur, which here drops steeply down to the road. Most houses in the village are so infested with fleas as to be scarcely habitable; moreover, for a prolonged stay, the village accommodation is far too cramped—one lives too much *coram publico*, especially if on a wedding journey, as I was.

Here it was easy enough to send one of the camp-guard of local gendarmerie up to the village to get fresh meat, when hovering kites proclaimed that the al-fresco butchers were at work. The stone-built cubby-holes, that I have dignified with the name of shops, would sometimes yield surprising stores. Honey in flask-like gourds from flowery valleys at mid altitude, white and purple grapes carried in empty kerosene-boxes all the way from Roda, walnuts and little tough pears from the upper heights, and dwarf cucumbers from the gardens of Sanaa, could be got in their season, when caravans were coming down the road.

As regards local supplies, wood comes up on donkeys from the foot-hills, and a camp in the strategic position I have mentioned gets the pick of it before it goes on to the village; no small advantage in a neighbourhood where you cannot cut yourself a walking stick. Water is brought up the hazardous slope of the main valley in kerosene-tins, deftly balanced on women's heads. Eggs may be got at any of the outlying villages in the district, at eight for a Turkish piastre, which is 2d.

Game is scarce and wild. The few remaining chikore

have been so persecuted by persevering riflemen, Turk and Arab, that a shot-gun has not much chance of making a bag. Pigeons are fairly plentiful in the early morning, feeding on the smooth, rock threshing-floors along the uplands. There is no four-footed game.

A grim region this, harried by vast forces that know no moderation. Drought reigns supreme for half a year, then come the summer storms circling wide below, with thunder and devastating rain, trailing their skirts across the foot-hills and blotting out the underworld. When two such storms meet and war across the spur, the district is scourged and scarred with violent spates and, in the lull, behind the crackling thunder, one may hear the subdued roar of many torrents pouring down the valley to waste. And when young crops show promise, they may be ravaged by hordes of locusts, herded by *afrits* from their hatching-ground in the Empty Quarter to sail before the easterly wind until Allah drives them into the Red Sea.

The track of war has left its mark here too. Along the heights are strewn battered villages, still occupied by a dogged remnant of their former folk, lacking hope or energy to rebuild, but brooding on the past. Sôk al-Khamîs is a strong, strategic link with Sanaa, dominating the road and access to the main scarp of Yamen. More than once the Turks have grappled with the Imam's followers across this spur, as recently as 1911. One village has been pounded by the guns of both belligerents in turn, as the tide of battle ebbed and flowed.

In spite of all its drawbacks, Sôk al-Khamîs has a charm of its own. The air is dry and bracing, even at

midsummer, for the place is 7200 feet above sea-level. The view is magnificent, especially after heavy rain has fallen to clear the atmosphere. South and west, 3000 feet below, the foot-hills stretch for many miles, ringed remotely by giant *massifs*. Menakha can be plainly seen in the west, on a clear day, overshadowed by the heights of Shibam. The ridge on which it stands rises slightly to the positions of Hadar and Beh, then plunges down northwards in a long, bold curve like the ram of a battleship. Southward, the distant hills of Ans—where the summer lightning flickers at dusk and most of the storms converge—denote the source of the Sihâm. Along the eastern sky the main heights of Yamen central plateau rise abruptly and, northward, the spur of Sôk al-Khamîs runs up to meet this main system toward Mount Hadhur, known locally as Nebi Shaib, and said to be the tallest peak in Yamen.

Up this spur, north-east from Sôk al-Khamîs, the road to Sanaa winds steeply athwart the main scarp.

After an hour's climb the road passes a massive Arab tower used as an outpost and manned by Ottoman troops. A more conventional stronghold is perched on the crest of Minar—a height of the main range from which this caracol takes its name. Both positions are tactically essential to Sôk al-Khamîs, which is menaced by the proximity of these heights.

The road tops the first crest of the main range after an hour's climb from Sôk al-Khamîs, and runs down the other side, curving round the shoulder of Minar and rising again along a ridge which forms a watershed between the Sardid and the Sihâm, the two great wadi-systems of central Yamen.

On the right the steep ravine of Agami drops south-

ward to join the Sihâm, eventually, through a maze of foot-hills, and on the left the ridge sweeps grandly down to the vast Khàrifi valley, which drains into the Sardid. This tributary rises among the heights of Nebi Shaib, which may be seen away to the north, a flat-headed giant with an Ottoman post on top.

The Khàrifi valley is one of the finest in Yamen, about five miles across, all terraced for crops, and dotted with towers and villages right down to its narrow, rocky bed, 3000 feet below the road. There is a white-domed spring for thirsty travellers close on the right at this spot, and, beyond, the track rises resolutely to surmount the Salàmi pass, the highest point on the Hodeida-Sanaa road (9400 feet above sea-level). An Arab tower, called Beit-es-Salàmi, overlooks the pass from craggy heights on the left, but the real warden of this stretch of road is Minar caracol, within gunshot to the south-east, on its commanding crest.

Then follows a stumbling march down a boulder-strewn road that skirts the upper heights of Boân valley, and descends to the point where it debouches onto the actual plateau. Here is Boân village, a small hamlet and a cluster of stone-built booths, where a market is held on Thursdays. A brook flows down this valley, and is spanned by an excellent road-bridge of well-pointed masonry. From here to Sanaa—some twenty miles on—the road is good enough for a motor car, and is often traversed by portly officials of rank in rickety buggies from Sanaa. An alternative road-trace has been made up the Boân valley, evidently in quest of an easier route over the main pass ; it has been abandoned. From Boân, the road, still running eastward, skirts the lower spurs of Nebi Shaib in frequent, well-scarped curves.

On the right is a rugged plateau, much eroded by ravines, from Nebi Shaib, in which there is some scanty cultivation.

Straight ahead, on a salient knoll, the village of Metna may be seen across a sea of hummocks, soon after leaving Boân.

About an hour from Boân, on the left of the road, there is a big, dome-covered cistern and a trough of plastered masonry, which contain a good supply of water for human and animal needs.

Farther on, the road passes the little village of Yazil, close on the left above the track, and reaches Metna in two hours from Boân.

The actual village of Metna is some distance off the route to the left, and considerably above it, on the claw of a far-flung spur of Nebi Shaib.

The road passes between Metna market on the left, and on the right Thinam Pasha, a defensible serai usually held by a strong detachment of Ottoman infantry, commanded by a senior officer. This post fell for want of water in the last rising of 1911, so a large tank has now been built close to the post to collect surface drainage. If its contents, when I last saw it, were a fair sample, I hope that the garrison will never be reduced to drink them. The usual water supply is from a well close to the road, some distance west of the post, and quite good.

Metna market is a mere collection of stone hovels, where a few supplies—such as flour and *ghi*—can be obtained, with luck; but just beyond the market, adjoining the road, there is a caravansary for travellers, an Arab tower and zareba where there is entertainment for man and beast, and incidentally for parasitic vermin.

The blithesome flea is not found beyond Sôk al-Khamîs ; here, and at Sanaa, bugs are the trouble ; plain, plebeian parasites of relentless habits, that swarm up the legs of a camp-bed or drop on you from the roof. The worthy landlord will tell you that there *are* none, and show you a clean, mud-plastered upper chamber, where you can have a meal and admire the view of the open plateau through the tiny, loopholed windows: but you had better not stop the night.

Beyond Metna the road runs north-east across an open, arable tract, down and up a long, gentle dip, but without a curve for miles until it reaches a well-scarped zigzag down off Metna plateau into the valley of Musâgid. This wadi drains northward, denoting a fresh watershed, for all the drainage on Metna plateau is southward from Nebi Shaib.

The village of Musâgid is half a mile off the road, to the left, and on the left bank of its wadi, clinging to the crest and slope of a low, rocky scarp like a colony of swallows' nests. Away to the right are the heights of Jibal Haddah, where Wadi Musâgid takes its rise, and where most of the walnuts and orchard-fruit grow that supply Sanaa market.

The road crosses two more wadis that drain the northern slopes of Haddah and, after three hours' good going from Metna, climbs a long ridge strewn with black, basaltic boulders and known as Jebal Aswad. From the crest of this ridge, eastward, there is a fine view of Sanaa plain, and across it is Sanaa, at the foot of Mount Nukûm, that guards the city. Arabs still tell how the Imam, splitting hairs in fallen Sanaa with his council of sages, was roused to instant flight by the flash of Faizi's bayonets along that sombre ridge, when the

gallant old Turk made his straight, hard-hitting rush from the coast.

A well-traced zigzag descends the ridge in fairly easy gradients to the plain a thousand feet below. Here, on the left of the road, an orchard and garden, by a tank and an ancient summer-house of Faizi Pasha, will give the traveller rest, shade and water, while he sends forward a mounted messenger to make sure of his reception, for Sanaa does not always welcome visitors.

The road in lies due east, straight across a level plain for three miles, to the 'Gate of the Jews,' at the western angle of the city.



SANAA, WITH MOUNT NUKŮM IN THE BACKGROUND.



SANAA PLAIN FROM JEBAL ASWAD (p. 67).

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CHAPTER IV

SANAA

The city of Sanaa lies east and west on a broad, open plain that drains, on an almost imperceptible slope, toward the north, and is girt by low hills. The 'west end' is not the fashionable quarter, but quite the reverse, being devoted entirely to Jews. Beyond this settlement, eastward, is the Turkish quarter of Bir al-Azab, a spacious suburb of official residences and walled gardens, east of which is the Arab town—alone known as Sanaa to local folk.

At the eastern angle of Sanaa is the *kalah* or citadel, slightly raised above the city, on the tip of a far-flung spur from Mount Nukûm. That salient ridge rises more than a thousand feet above the plain, which is 7600 feet above sea-level.

On the crest of Nukûm is a Turkish fort and observation-post. Up there are two big howitzers, but it is doubtful whether either is still serviceable or could be made so, while their heavy ammunition must be used sparingly at this distance from the coast, with only pack-transport to convey it. The position might check an open, massed advance on the plain, or knock the city about an enemy's ears and make the citadel untenable, but it would be rather in 'the air' during a well-

organized investment, for it is some hours' journey from the city by a winding mountain-track.

Nor can the citadel itself be said to safeguard the city to any great extent. Its slight elevation does not give sufficient command, and, in the last rising, the brunt of the artillery defence fell to field-pieces, hurried hastily to positions at the northern gates. Its guns are a mere saluting-battery on field-carriages, and much in evidence at the Little Feast after Ramadhan, when they fire blank at intervals for two days.

Outlying posts, on spurs of the engirdling foot-hills, help to guard the city against surprise, but they are very isolated and would probably fall in detail before a general attack if pushed home.

Northward, from which direction attack has already been delivered, there is much tamarisk bush right up to the walls of Sanaa; a mile-wide belt of scattered greenery on either bank of the brook Alaf. This water-course rises from a spring within the city, to flow under the northern wall. It trends north-east round the Nukûm *massif* into the broad valley of Kharîd, where the legionaries of Rome grappled with light-armed Hamdani tribesmen before the Christian era. This brook is diverted into alternate channels for irrigation, and along its course the best local crops occur, guarded by high-perched slingers, whose strident curses and whirring, clay projectiles hold the birds in check throughout the live-long day.

Sanaa town stands on the site of ancient Ozal, a city of note in Sheba's day. Its architecture is of mediaeval Arab type—tall, rectangular stone towers of four to six storeys, with tiny casements embellished with stained glass. Among characteristic features is the cement-lined

vertical gutter leading from the household bathroom, where you can stand on a stumpy-legged table and drench yourself with a tin dipper from a huge, fat-bellied jar of red earthenware. All such houses have massive, embossed doors of acacia wood, with a solid wicket set therein. This is fitted with a cunning bolt of smooth wood, which can be drawn by a long cord from some upper eyrie, after inspection of the visitor. These houses of Arab Sanaa are great, rambling structures, with bewildering passages and unexpected rooms, opening off dark, corkscrew stairs, and loopholes for musketry in their lower storeys. The whole house gives the impression of a fortress or a prison, and indeed many of them have played both parts in their time.

This is the indigenous Arab type of architecture, designed in well-dressed, massive masonry, and found in all the better-class strongholds and fortified villages among the hills of the Aden hinterland.

In Sanaa proper are the Government offices, Post and Telegraph, and the Hukoomah or seat of administration, a massive, two-storey building of well-dressed stone, where the affairs of the vilayet are transacted.

Arab Sanaa is nothing if not religious. Many mosques thrust up their slender minarets above the tall, tower-like houses in varied styles of architecture, all silent pointers to Sanaa's past history, when men could build with bold conception and infinite pains to perpetuate the faith that was in them and the thoughts that swayed them. The circular, ornate shafts of Zeidi mosques far predominate all others, and shrines of Zeidi saints lift their white domes like button-mushrooms throughout the grey, old town.

Right through the middle of Sanaa runs a watercourse

from south to north. It is a tributary of the Kharîd and known locally as the Shaab. Along it, northward from the city, is a much used market-route to Rôda (a big Arab town, eight miles north of Sanaa), where the vineyards grow, which keep the city supplied with white and purple grapes from June to October.

Within the city walls this watercourse is a convenient road in time of drought, but a raging flood in spate, and a morass for some time after. Along it runs the only carriage-road, which circles round the outskirts of the town, for the houses of Arab Sanaa are set too thick together to admit of vehicular traffic.

The carriages are dilapidated, hooded buggies on four precarious wheels, built in the palmy days of Turkey's power. It is surprising how they get about in one piece, but they *do*, and travel considerable distances sometimes, taking prominent passengers to road-head at Boân bridge or jaunting out to Rôda.

Old Sanaa is surrounded by a 40 foot wall of mud and stone, dating back to the Imams' sway, long before the Turkish invasion. This wall is flanked with ancient towers at frequent intervals, and the Turks have done something to enhance the defences of its gates. There is first the sally-port up at the citadel, a zigzag outlet of massive strength, through which there is no admittance except on business. Piercing the northern wall of Sanaa is the Bab esh-Shaab, an important gateway through which comes a stream of market-produce every morning ; sluggish camels with merchandise from afar, and droves of small, rat-tailed donkeys scurrying past with loads of fodder and firewood, and kerosene cases full of grapes. Midway along the southern wall, opposite the Bab esh-Shaab, is the Bab al-Yamen, through which gate the

caravan-traffic flows towards Dhamar, Yerîm and Ibb. There is not much doing this way since the bulk of Ottoman troops rolled up from that direction in 1913.

Strategically, the most important gateway of the whole city is the triple port of Bab es-Sba, a name given to three adjacent gates, two of which face north and south, on either side of the narrow neck that joins the quarter of Bir al-Azab to the main town, about five hundred yards apart. The third is a massive central arch, crowned and flanked by a strong guard-house and quarters for troops and police. Through this arch, which is almost a tunnel, runs the road joining the native town with the Ottoman quarter of Bir al-Azab—this side of the arch still bears the mark of cannon-shot, a memento of street fighting. Close to the town entrance of this central gateway is the Municipal Pharmacy, where you may get a prescription made up with some approach to accuracy, if you write in French and keep an eye on the dispenser. In the same direction, toward the northern gate of Bab es-Sba, is the Military Hospital—a fine building, under sound discipline and supervision.

Passing through the middle gate one comes out onto the broad, open space of Midan esh-Sherara, where troops drill. The low, rambling residence of the Vali is on the right, in a vast, walled garden, and on the left of the Midan is the Government school—a substantial stone building for resident scholars. State education is free throughout Yamen when available at all.

Past the school is the Staff-office or *Diwan arkan harb*, a two-storeyed house of vague architecture, standing in its own walled grounds, with a sentry at the door. Here receptions are held on state occasions, when the unofficial stranger would do well to present himself in

sombre suit and red tarboosh, to pay his respects to the powers that be.

Along the principal thoroughfares of this quarter—mere dusty tracks though they are—cluster the lesser houses and a few shops ; but the quarter is chiefly taken up by Turkish residential houses, in spacious gardens enclosed by high, mud walls.

Bir al-Azab separates the town of Sanaa from its Jew quarter, which must have been quite isolated at one time. The Turks have thrown a somewhat inadequate extension of the great Sanaa wall round both quarters. An active man could scale it without assistance at several points. It is strongest and highest near the gates, of which there are three for Bir al-Azab and the Jew quarter (known as al-Kaa). Two belong to Bir al-Azab, one facing south to the open plain and called Bab al-Balakah, the other, Bab el-Roumi, facing north toward the garden-country.

There is a passable carriage-road through the latter gate out to Rôda—a favourite drive in quiet times.

The Jew quarter has only one gate, and that is well guarded by military and police who question wayfarers. It is known as Bab al-Kaa or Bab al-Yahûd, and through it runs the road to Hodeida and the coast. Jewish houses are low, seldom more than two storeys, and built of sun-baked brick dressed with mud. I never saw a stone house in the quarter.

Turkish houses in Bir al-Azab have little to commend them. They, too, are mud-dressed and devoid of ornament ; jerry-built, box-like structures for the most part, with badly-fitting windows in profusion, giving far too much light and heat, and letting in the driving rain when storms occur. Their bathrooms and lavatories are



A ZEIDI MOSQUE (p. 71).



A YAMEN WELL FOR IRRIGATION.

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cement-lined recesses of primitive design, similar to the Arab type, but of worse workmanship.

These are minor drawbacks, for, after all, each house stands in a pleasant garden, overhung, perhaps, with ruddy pomegranate and tall rose-bushes bearing blooms of pink, or white, or cream. Maybe the utilitarian zeal of the market gardener who runs the place is a bit overdone, and it is difficult to get about among his cabbages and tomatoes, as paths are not considered necessary. But the greater point is that you do not have to run the garden yourself, and yet can enjoy its produce and proximity.

Each garden is watered from a well within the grounds, on a system that has prevailed in Yamen for many centuries. Tall brick or stone pillars support an axle across the well, which carries a big wooden pulley-wheel. Over this runs the well-cord, at one end of which is the bucket—usually an entire bullock-hide, with the head, tail and legs cut off—and at the other end a sober-minded camel or a hump-backed zebu. A 'tripping-line' is also attached to the bottom of the hide bucket. This runs over a revolving wooden bar at the mouth of the well, to the saddle or yoke of the animal, which spends most of its waking hours walking up or down an inclined ramp of earth, of a length proportioned to the distance of the water from the surface. The ramp slopes down from the well, in order to assist the animal in pulling up a full bucket. The attendant stands at the well-curb, by the side of his patient beast, with hand and stick raised above his head, while he sings a few bars of an old-world song in a minor key, until the bucket fills below. Then whack! comes the stick—if the intelligent animal has not already started down the ramp

at the end of the stanza, as it usually does—and when both have reached the foot of the slope, up pops the bucket from the mouth of the well. The man heaves on the tripping-line, and the contents of the bucket go splashing into a stone trough, to fill a cistern hard by. The garden is watered by irrigation channels from this cistern as required.

Sometimes two buckets and two animals are employed at a single well, and one may often see a camel and a bullock working side by side.

The plaintive 'Song of the Well' suggests age-long toil and the patient endurance of Nature's moods: accompanied by the musical creaking of the pulley-wheel, it has a charm of its own that accords with sunny days and sharp nights, in a half-forgotten city that the world has overlooked.

Turkish houses in Bir al-Azab are commodious and airy, but the older ones are almost invariably haunted by a dreadful pest, that no philosophy can disregard and no poetry embellish—they are infested with bugs, which dwell in the walls and woodwork and issue from cracks and crevices, even by day, to plague humanity. The only safe refuge is on the flat roof, which is too sun-scorched by day and too chilly by night to harbour such vermin.

From the roof of a tall house on the northern outskirts of Bir al-Azab, a fairly good view may be had of Sanaa and its environs.

Beyond the wall, outside Bab el-Roumi, stretch green streaks of tamarisk and garden-ground, that merge into an open plain, trending northward between two wide-set rows of low hills. Along this plain, in echelon, are occasional tall, round towers of old sun-baked brick,

once used as keeps and watch-towers to guard the approach to Sanaa. They are unable to withstand modern artillery, as one, that looks like a battered stilton, plainly shows. Beyond these towers a long, low spur of limestone[1] juts out from the eastern hills; past it the plain reopens toward Rôda, half visible through the haze, like a flat candlestick with a minaret in the middle. North of Rôda the plain dips gently out of sight, and one may see the wide north-easterly trend of the Kharîd valley sweeping off to Jauf.

Looking eastward across garden-ground and city, one may count the minarets of sectarian Sanaa against the dark spurs of Mount Nukûm.

Southward, across the houses of Bir al-Azab, there is a glimpse of bare, level plain stretching to low hills that almost block the southern horizon, eight miles away. Through a gap between these and the outer tentacles of Nukûm runs the road to the south.

Toward the west are the featureless mud houses of the Jew quarter, and beyond them, flanked by taller hills, the low, black ridge of Jibal Aswad, over which runs the Hodeida-Sanaa road.

The country round lacks the grandeur of the true Yamen highlands, but has a lure of its own for those who seek it.

The broad, open plain, where a horseman may gallop as he will, in a bracing climate, is an advantage in itself, and one not found in the actual highlands, where there is seldom a patch of level ground big enough for a tennis-court.

Even in the height of summer the mornings are sharp

[1] This spur provides much of the lime for the city. It is an accidental outcrop, the hills that bound this plain being basaltic.

and exhilarating before the sun climbs over the ridge of Mount Nukûm. Then is the time to sally forth with gun in hand, through the Roumi gate, past the sleepy sentry, and out through miles of dew-drenched tamarisk, to pick up a hare or two and perhaps a snipe along the Alaf brook.

Or you can sit on a grassy bank by the brook, looking up at the clear, blue sky between the feathery tamarisk-tops, and wait for pigeons to come over on their marauding quests. Some friendly slinger will hail you from his lofty perch, when your quarry is on the wing, so you can watch the field-voles creep out along the irrigation banks that line the lucerne-crops, bright-eyed, timid creatures, that dive into their holes, like a conjuring trick, if you move a muscle.

And your escort will chat in a subdued undertone of prices in the bazar and their back-pay, or affairs of state, from the underside, as *they* see them, while you watch the tawny-winged fritillaries flutter across the mauve-flowered lucerne, until a warning yell brings you to your feet to deal with the first flight of blue-grey pigeons as it storms past above the tamarisk.

The stranger who is in touch with country life will find a better welcome outside the walls of Sanaa than within the city, where aliens are not wanted, and even Turks are at a discount since the firman proclaiming the Imam's control by means of the Islamic code.

Sanaa was once noted for her handicrafts, and even yet Sanaani work in brass and copper, nay, even Sanaani hookah-stems, are vouched for throughout the East, but her industries are in evil case just now.

The bazars are all in the eastern quarter of the Arab town, inward from Bab al-Yamen, where the meat-

market is. These bazars were once the pride of Arabia, but you may go through them from end to end now and see both larger shops and native booths filled with chintz and printed fabrics, cheap shoes and meretricious goods from Europe, that denote a spurious civilization.

The brass and copper-workers, whose wares once delighted the Moguls, are now represented by men who confine their efforts to utensils of everyday use, for they say that commercial stagnation has killed the market for artistic work. Yet you may still find, groping under the work-benches, old ink-horns, ewers and inscribed bowls that once graced an Imam's court, and now await their turn to be re-wrought into clumsy brazen vessels that will command a readier sale.

There are no shops worth mentioning at Bir al-Azab, though fresh fruit and vegetables can always be got from the gardens of the quarter, most of which are run by market-gardeners—always open for a deal.

In the Jewish quarter there are long, tortuous bazars, where European prints and calicoes may be bought, many in Oriental designs which you will never see in Europe. Woollen fabrics and various colours in flannelette are largely sold here and in Sanaa itself, for the marked extremes of temperature during the twenty-four hours make such wear desirable. In Sanaa one may buy 'poshteens'—long, sleeveless jackets of sheepskin, tanned soft, and dyed in geometric patterns, with the wool turned inwards.

The Jews run most of the better shops in Sanaa proper, but have to clear out before night and go back to their quarter, as no Jew is allowed to live in sacred Sanaa. Domestic servants in actual employ are exempt. Anyone who could not do without strong drink would have

a bad time in Sanaa. The Jews make wine from the abundant grapes procurable in their season, and also extract arrack from fermented dates, but this is a clandestine traffic that incurs the rigours of the code, enacting serious penalties on vendor and purchaser: an alien's position is precarious enough in Sanaa without avoidable *faux-pas*. There is a street of ostensible cafés, adjoining the Arab bazar, much frequented by the Turks, and known to Arabs generally as el-Casino. In those cafés an habitué can get something stronger than coffee in spite of the Islamic code.

The townsfolk of Sanaa spend a great deal of their time in watching for contraventions of the Sheria, in the hopes of paying off old scores. Meanwhile trade is rapidly dwindling, alien merchants are discouraged, and even the Jew traders are beginning to leave, unable to make headway against the prevailing commercial depression, and constantly harried by the antiquated clauses of the Sheria.

Harris, the explorer, computed the population of Sanaa at 50,000 in '91, and the last consular report (1905) gave it at 20,000. There is no census and I have no means of checking these figures, but the number of empty houses and the chronic commercial depression indicate a decreasing population.

Fallen as Sanaa is from her former high position among the cities of Arabia, she is still the pride of her citizens and the wonder of the outland tribes. In the neighbouring hills, agates, cornelians and other handsome stones are found, giving colour to wild reports of hidden gems. The local gardens have been much neglected, but they are still fair enough in contrast with the sterile hills that engirdle the plain. Tradition tells how a

wealthy citizen of Sanaa once decided to leave home on a long journey, and had actually started, when a voice from the skies proclaimed his folly and the merits of the city that he was leaving ; he returned, abandoning all idea of his journey.

The isolated position of Sanaa, a walled city on a plain encompassed by barren hills, has tended to create and preserve a Sanaa dialect, and certainly to engender a feeling of arrogance among her citizens.

Yet she has never been able to dictate a policy or stand fast to her own ideals, but has rather submitted to outside forces without a struggle, ever ready to fawn on paramount power to save herself. Now she is beginning to feel the closing grip of the Sheria, as wielded by the Imam. She welcomed the firman, confirming his sway with torch-lit battlements and noisy throngs. Turkish officers who rode with Izzet Pasha to her relief three years ago are jostled and cursed in her streets by portly merchants, who invoke the Imam now that it is politic to do so, though history might have taught them what woes have been wrought by the Imams.

They find it convenient to forget how they cried and wrung their hands, when the grey dawn revealed the Imam's followers swarming through the tamarisk on Sanaa plain, and Turkish guns flashed redly from their walls to guard the city.

Now Sanaa scoffs at Turkish rule, and places the Imam on a pinnacle of patriotism which he and his have never merited.

In her pride she deems herself inviolate, for she has ever shrunk from a foeman's grip and so secured favourable terms for herself. Yet, with her inadequate defences, she was never more vulnerable than now, when

modern commercial enterprise has armed the remotest tribesmen with modern weapons. She clamours against the Turks, and fails to realize that Turkish troops are her sole safeguard ; for the Imam, without Ottoman support, would be a broken reed in the day of tribal trouble.

Her population is unwarlike, yet rancorous ; always ripe for sedition, yet shrinking from its bloody issue.

There the city stands in her isolation and arrogance like a fat heifer among wolves, keenly watched from afar by warlike Sunni tribes amid their barren hills, prepared to risk much for the loot of her, while regarding her ancient splendour as but a vain snare, and her Zeidi inhabitants as no better than infidels.

CHAPTER V

BIRDS AND BEASTS

From a sportsman's point of view, Yamen is disappointing. It may be divided broadly into districts where game goes and you can't, and districts where you can go and game won't. The former are the wilder and less populated regions, where Ottoman rule is not, and the tribesmen have no close season for the stranger within their gates if once he strays abroad ; the latter comprise the populous and well-cultivated highlands of central Yamen, where the Turks still hold their ground, and the mild husbandmen will do no more than covertly set their village pariahs at you. An occasional panther or hill-leopard may be found in some secluded and almost inaccessible ravine, but four-footed game has almost ceased to exist, except for far-seeing gazelle that range the plains and flee at a thousand yards. There are far too many breech-loading rifles in Yamen for any beast of the wild to keep its confidence and continue to exist.

As for feathered game, apart from rock-pigeons, which abound in certain districts, there are but two representatives of regular occurrence—that king of sporting birds, the black-headed chikore, found among the upper heights, and the blue-wattled guinea-fowl, which ranges the plains between the foot-hills. Both these birds

are harried by Turkish soldiers and Arab gendarmes with their service rifles, while the wily aborigine takes his toll with an artifice like our brick-trap, but made of stone slabs from the hill-side.

A powerful rook-rifle is a necessary adjunct to the shot-gun for the exacting sportsman, or, failing that, a pom-pom.

Birds generally are not plentiful in Yamen, though far more so than residents make out. When I first arrived at Menakha I presented my credentials to the Kaimakam or civil governor of that grim, craggy, district, and mentioned my quest. "Birds, my dear," he exclaimed affectionately. "Birds—I've been here for years and have only seen crows." Menakha district turned out better than it looked, and on my departure, after two months' work, I invited that incredulous official to my quarters and showed him some three hundred skins all waiting to be packed—but no crows.

Commencing with the coast, aquatic birds are common, especially during the migrating season. Stately squadrons of pelican ride off Hodeida beach in the early summer at sunrise, watching the fisher-folk at their nets, and darting terns take arrow-like plunges from on high, down among the shoals of small fry near the surface. Flamingo keep to the mud-flats far beyond the town, where no human foot can approach them, for their gleaming white and roseate plumage makes a tempting target to the Anatolian recruit fresh from home.

Little piebald larks (*pyrrhulauda melanocephala*) bustle about in pairs, or small sociable parties, along the caravan-tracks outside Hodeida, and saintly white egrets feed on unspeakable garbage among the town middens.

Bird-life is very scanty on the Tihama, where the sun

smites fiercely, and there is little shade, but the black-cap warbler may be heard at dawn among the scanty bush of the maritime desert, and along its inland edge harriers beat the barren uplands for lurking jerboa.

At Bajil, where the foot-hills begin, bird-life is more plentiful: the ubiquitous sparrow sways chattering on tall heads of millet, and tiny silver-finches flicker across the open to dive into some thorny tree. The yellow sparrow (*passer euchlorus*) occurs in numbers here among the mimosa—their halting passage through the bush looks exactly like a flight of canaries.

At sunrise on Bajil plain you may hear the hornbills calling vociferously to each other, and approach the queer, misshapen bird while absorbed in his weird, spasmodic chant. A high-shouldered freak is he, with a huge black bill and sombre plumage; when he balances on his long tail, and opens wide that ungainly beak to sing, he looks like a dissipated undertaker.

Among the denser bush of Hajeilah, gayer birds prevail, especially the long-tailed roller (*coracias caudatus*), a symphony in cobalt and azure, shaded delicately with fawn. The male sports a long, finely-pointed tail, and spends a great deal of his time with raffish bachelor birds on the field telegraph-wire to Sanaa, while the female stays at home in some pollarded jujube-tree and bites her tapering tail with vexation; that is why all female rollers of this type have such ragged tails. But the gadabout male is not a bad husband. He will work for hours, when locusts are a-wing, to supply the home larder, and may be often heard skirring a kind of love-song as he cuts somersaults, and volplanes to cheer his nesting mate.

Sunbirds, too, are common in this district—gaudy

little chaps, in shot-silk and epaulets of flame, that cling to aloe-flowers, and explore their depths with long, wire-like tongues for hidden insects. Their sober-hued mates look almost dowdy in contrast with such splendour. In coy seclusion, amid tall trees in deep ravines, you may meet that quaint anomaly, the land kingfisher. The bird's retiring habits belie its startling appearance. Its back and wings are bright metallic blue, barred with black, while a glowing rufus breast, an ashen head and a big vermilion bill combine to give the bird away to the most casual observer. It feeds on insects and is seldom found near water.

Another dashing denizen of tall timber is the glossy starling, with his roving, yellow-ringed eye, his plum-coloured suit and smart white waistcoat.

Real songsters are scarce in the tropics, but Hajeilah groves have a homely sound at dawn from the throats of various warblers. One markedly unfamiliar note there is—that of the bush-cuckoo, a tawny, long-tailed bird that flits like a miniature pheasant through the bushes. Its song is like the murmur of a brook, and is only heard in the cool of the morning and when the afternoon heat has spent itself. Throughout the heat of the day the bird gets into thick bush and declines to move for anybody. Naughty little boys know this and creep within dense cover to catch it snoozing.

For startling plumage nothing can surpass the bird of paradise fly-catcher, denizen of mid-altitude, where he ranges among the coffee in deep ravines. He begins life (after he is fledged) as a brisk young spark, all bright rufus chestnut, with a face of shot-silk, topped by a jaunty crest 'just like mother.' Next year he will throw out unexpected splashes of white along his wings, as the

breeding season approaches, and the two central shafts of his tail grow longer and longer. The bird in his mature breeding-plumage presents an astounding contrast to his trim little chestnut mate. All he keeps of his original attire is the sheeny, green-black face and top-knot. The rest of him is pure white, to the tip of those long, delicate shafts, thrice the length of his normal tail, while he himself is barely the size of a sparrow.

Those two long tail-shafts are much prized by natives, who consider them a gift for a prince. Therefore this striking plumage is always accompanied by extreme shyness and timidity. No longer does our dandified friend flit through the coffee for any human eye to see. He haunts secluded and densely wooded ravines, guarded by giant precipices, ready always to flicker through the gloomy bush like a streak of white satin at the first alarm, and dive for safety down a thousand feet or so to the next belt of jungle.

Natives say that, if pursued, he will nip off his remarkable tail to discourage the hunter; a not unnatural legend, for the bird loses those tail-shafts after the breeding season, and slowly regains his normal plumage. They have a far more remarkable yarn about the bird, insisting that he is fond of tobacco, and *strong* tobacco at that. They say that if a man will but sit still among the coffee and smoke really rank tobacco he will attract these birds. Probably the main feature of the charm is sitting still, and tobacco helps you to do it.

Before leaving these mid-altitudes, we must not forget the green pigeon, which ranges no higher, and is common in the foot-hills when the wild figs are ripe. Olive tints of green and brown blend subtly on his back, with mauve-streaked wings, a grey-green head and neck,

and a canary-yellow breast. All these tints harmonize so perfectly with his surroundings, that you may mark a flight down into a tree and fail to detect their actual presence, till they leave like a tornado on the side your gun does not command.

It is among the foot-hills and adjacent plains that guinea-fowl occur—they never range up to mid-altitude (4000 feet).

These birds may be seen any morning at sunrise, feeding in large flocks out on the open fallow, well out of shot from any cover. They scutter about like farmyard hens, picking up stray corn and tasty insects, but if any one tries to approach them in a gradual and unostentatious manner, they edge persistently away, and to 'gallop' them on an active pony is but to test their marvellous powers of sprinting.

One ruse alone will circumvent them. A native or two should be sent right round the feeding flock, with instructions to walk gently in upon it, while the 'gun' posts himself in the best-wooded ravine that gives onto their feeding ground. They make for this as the men close in on them, and if pressed in front and rear will rise and give the sportsman a right and left.

The game-bird of the upper heights is the big, black-headed chikore (*caccabis melanocephala*), and a very difficult bird he is to bag. To begin with, he is disgracefully persecuted by any one who has a weapon of precision; and what Yamen Arab has not? They seldom hit him, but no bird likes to be surprised, while sunning himself or feeding in the open stubble, by the venomous impact of a picket-bullet that sends him shrieking and clucking across the valley, with a crop full of undigested grain.

Sooner than face these repeated shocks, he prefers to pick a scanty living among lonely kopjes where cultivation is not, or roam along the bleak breasts of mountain-giants where food is even scarcer. In this latter case the covey (usually three brace or so) will have its home among the boulders of some sheltered ravine, and file up stealthily at dusk to feed on lofty, terraced fields of barley. A guarded approach at dawn may surprise them, but it is much more likely that they have worked by then to the edge of the precipice, to skim low and drop like stones. The ardent sportsman, rushing forward to mark them down, will find himself on some shelving scarp, backing desperately while the shale drops tinkling from his frantic heels to a smiling, treacherous landscape, more than a furlong down.

The only other bird worth the attention of the sportsman is the rock-pigeon, which harries crops, and may be seen in the early morning, along the mountain road, looking for spilled grain. This is a neat, slate-grey bird, with black-barred wings and an iridescent gorge—a confirmed freebooter, whose home is on inaccessible ledges or in hidden caves.

On Sanaa plain, pigeons come from a great distance to raid the crops, and may be seen flying straight and high at sunrise on their marauding quest.

Some get so gorged that they shirk the return flight, and shelter from the heat of the day in deep wells. Officers of the Turkish garrison at Sanaa, who would a-hunting go, visit these wells, and drop stones down to shift their quarry. Sometimes the birds will wing up the shaft and scatter like a feathered bomb at the mouth of the well, with snipe-like twists that will test a first-rate performer, but as often as not they sit tight to the sides

of the well, and watch an avalanche of débris go hurtling down with equanimity. None but a spiteful sportsman would use his gun under such conditions, as he could not retrieve his kill, and few would care to lean far enough over that dizzy shaft.

There are but two practicable alternatives ; to call on the birds at the end of a ten-fathom line, or go home ; the latter course is usually followed.

Apart from mere sport the naturalist will find much to interest him at high altitude, *i.e.* from 7000 feet upwards.

He will find little along the sterile scarps of ultimate peaks at 9000 feet, especially in winter, when even eagles keep low, but when spring has touched apricot and almond to blossom, before leafage veils the trees, he will meet *pseudacanthis yemenensis* among the orchard terraces of Menakha, pouring out its soul in song.

The Natural History Museum has honoured this little bird by placing it at the head of a new genus. The bird looks like a sparrow and sings like a skylark. It is much in demand at Sanaa as a cage-bird ; though fairly common in the district it favours, it is not widely distributed. Its vertical range is from 7000 to 8000 feet.

There are few birds to interest the naturalist on the littoral plain or even in the maritime foot-hills. The lowest ground where I got anything new was up at Wasil (4000 feet). It was a grosbeak, with yellow splashes on the wings, looking rather like a big goldfinch—a sub-species of *rhyncostruthus percivali*, which I discovered on the inland ranges of the Aden hinterland in 1900. Both the original and its sub-species feed on the small sessile of the fruit of the hill euphorbia, and only appear when those formidable thickets are fruiting.

The Menakha district yielded the best results ; I worked it in the winter. Beside the *pseudacanthis*, mentioned above, I got a furtive little fellow in sober greyish brown (*parisoma buryi*)—one specimen only.

Quite a distinct *accentor*, with a strong, whitish, eyebrow streak, occurs among the bushes and boulders along the main road coastwards from the town, and dingy little birds resembling finch-larks (which they are not) flit in small flocks along the barren slopes, and have acquired the proud title of *poliospiza menachensis*. They are fairly common too at Sôk al-Khâmis.

I got a new sub-species among the leafless walnut groves below Menakha, a modest little chap no bigger than a wren, with a tree-green coat and a light brown waistcoat. I hesitate to give his name—it is *cryptolopha umbrovirens yemenensis*, and he can't help it.

A new thrush may be found along the coffee gardens and scarped terraces of Menakha, a sizeable long-tailed bird of a general greyish brown with bright rust-red under the wings. He is a crafty customer, flickering across a narrow terrace to dive to the one below, and finally sulking among the coffee, where a careful search will reveal him perched a yard or two from your gun in thick cover—an impossible shot, and he knows it.

If I were asked to name the characteristic bird of Menakha, I should say the stonechat. At dawn on a wintry morning, with the mist hanging heavily across the ravines and all the world a-shiver, he will be the only bird about. He sits at frequent intervals, but always solitary, on rocks and boulders and stone-faced terraces in his conspicuous suit of black and white and grey, with his feathers fluffed up to keep out the cold. He is very tame, but if he thinks you are going to pass too close to

him, he will eye you indignantly for half a second and dive into some cleft or cranny. Later in the morning, when the sun has warmed the air, he will take wing like any other bird.

He is the first bird up in the morning, and the only one you will find among the sun-scorched boulders in the middle of the day, when even the sparrows have stopped quarrelling among the coffee and are pretending to sleep.

On Sanaa plain there is another new species, allied somewhat to the chats and wheatears. It is a biggish buff-coloured bird, about the size and shape of our common thrush, with remarkably erect carriage and alert habits. Though fairly common, it is difficult to approach. It frequents open ground, usually perching on an irrigation bank or a clod of loam in a bit of bare fallow, and is a fine judge of distance, so far as the range of a small shot-gun is concerned. It has received the name of *oenanthe yemenensis*.

But enough of small fry. I do not suppose that anyone has a penchant for vultures, though he cannot but admire the soaring flight of *gyps fulvus* (the Griffon vulture), as he climbs in easy spirals up the sky. These vast birds, with their eleven-foot wing-spread, patrol the heavens on solitary beats all day, to sink at dusk to some remote ravine. Few human eyes descry them, mere specks, high-hung and widely scattered, in a fervent sky, like a vault of glowing steel, but there each bird cruises tirelessly on its appointed course, searching, with far-seeing, steadfast gaze, ravine and crag and peak. When a sick baboon crawls under a boulder to die on the mountain-side, away from the mischievous herd, or a camel kneels down for the last time on the caravan-route, *gyps* notes the occurrence, and comes down to investi-

gate, on a long descending spiral that usually finishes with a magnificent volplane. If you are anywhere about, you will hardly be aware of his presence, until you hear the air screaming through his wide-set pinions ; but that sweeping, spiral flight has signalled to outlying cruisers, which close in on the beat of the lucky bird and repeat its manœuvre. The larger the carcase the greater the concourse that will arrive to deal with it from the remoter sky.

That is how vultures find their prey ; by eyesight and patient co-operation, though, to the casual observer, it seems almost miraculous that a carcase can attract, from an apparently empty sky, a host of feathered fiends to hiss and gaggle and fight and tear till only the bones are left.

Then comes the chance of the lordly laemmergeier, who likes bones, but has neither the flesh-tearing beak of the griffon nor its punishing wing-power.

Yet he is a first class exponent of aviation, and has probably been sailing about for hours, like a giant kite, watching the proceedings with fierce, red-ringed eyes.

There is a rush like the wind in tall trees, a gaunt pariah yelps and leaps hastily aside, and the laemmergeier is gliding on easy pinions a hundred yards off, with a bone in his beak.

The bird goes banking steeply up an ascending spiral, to a height of a thousand feet or so, then drops the bone and swoops down after it, a very good second, to earth, for who can tell if some four-footed prowler may not be lurking ready?

If the bone is shattered the bird picks out the marrow, if not, he repeats the performance again and again. If the bone is too light to be thus broken, after several

attempts he swallows it whole. I have taken a hatful of bones and hair out of the crop and stomach of one bird.

The male is slightly smaller than the female and of general tawny hue. His better half looks much more striking, with jet-black shades across her back and a champagne-coloured breast. She measures about four feet from the tip of her hooked beak to the end of her kite-like tail, and twice as much across the wings. These birds would frequently hover above my camp and the Ottoman outposts at Sôk al-Khamîs, but are very wary and difficult to approach, being always on the wing, except when they snatch a bone. The only way to get a shot was to be busily engaged at skinning some sizeable bird or beast, when a laemmergeier would come sailing over to see what you were doing. To catch the bird's eye was fatal ; he would 'bank,' and sheer off at once, but a cautious, sidelong gaze, and a well-timed snatch at a 12-bore, loaded with swan-shot, would often be successful. My camp was on the edge of a big drop, and I generally found the bird dead after its fall. A wounded laemmergeier is difficult to tackle, without injuring it as a specimen, for it has a vicious beak, and its huge talons grip like a steel trap. I once 'downed' a female onto some fallow, below my camp, with a broken wing. She hurtled down like a disabled aeroplane, and I found her full of fight. She was far too good a specimen to spoil with any clumsy *coup de grâce*, so I closed with her, shielded by a piece of blanket, and chloroformed her with a handful of cotton-wool, saturated with the drug.

The female is much scarcer than the male in the Yamen highlands, and I have seen neither in any other

part of Southern Arabia. Both sexes have the same baleful eyes—a staring, black pupil, set in a straw-coloured iris, ringed with scarlet.

One dreadful fact must be whispered about these lordly birds: they are full of lice, and the taxidermist, who does not change and tub, after skinning one, is in for a very bad time.

The imperial and golden eagles range the lonely peaks of Yamen, but are few and far between. Hawks and harriers are far too common, and will often take a stricken bird before the indignant naturalist can get to it.

Before turning to beasts proper we will consider beasts improper. Noxious reptiles and insects are not common in Yamen generally, and very rare in the highlands. At mid altitude I have found a few big cobras up to eight feet in length and seldom less than six, but I never saw a scorpion or a tarantula the whole time I was in the country, though both are common in the Aden hinterland and Somaliland.

Bright blue lizards nod and bow at you as you skirt the fields, and chase each other along the stone terraces, but they are quite harmless, though they fight desperately with each other. The conqueror becomes a still more vivid blue and blushes a bright terra cotta along his tail, while the vanquished turns in a flash an unobtrusive greyish brown and scuttles for cover. They have the same uncanny gift when stalking insects in the open or unwilling to court observation. It is very embarrassing to say "Look at that bright blue lizard," and be asked "What bright blue lizard?" You have never taken your eyes off the creature, and yet it has vanished. Such incidents require explaining.

The prevalent creepy-crawly in Yamen is certainly the

millipede. He is also the creepiest crawly, though he hasn't got nearly a thousand feet and is quite harmless.

Strictly speaking he is not a beast, but my wife called him that when she found one in the tent after a rainy evening.

He was a lustrous cylinder of brownish black, about as thick as a stout lead-pencil and half a foot long. At one end was his head, a pair of short antennae and prominent eyes, and the other end was neatly rounded off like a sausage.

All the underneath of him was a rippling fringe of pale brown legs that looked like a column of infantry out of step. When handled he curled up into a tight coil, and was flung into the night.

They live chiefly on decayed vegetable matter, are very common after rain, and are not found at low altitudes.

The typical mammal of the Yamen highlands is the jerbille, a soft-coated field-rat, with a delicately pencilled tail and kangaroo-like habits. He honeycombs the field-banks of Sanaa plain and inhabits the stone terraces of upland farms. He sits bolt upright at the mouth of his hole, but is more of a quadruped than his cousin the jerboa, who depends almost entirely on his hind legs for locomotion. The jerbille travels like a rat training for the long jump, and is a mixture of curiosity and timidity. He will sit watching you with a gaze that seems eternal, dive earthwards when you move a finger, and creep out cautiously again—a whisker at a time—to see what you are doing.

It is best to shoot at fair range such specimens as you require.

They are too wary to enter a cage-trap, and the 'back-

breaker' or any trap that kills them makes them the certain prey of ants (the foe of every naturalist). It is difficult to trap in the Yamen highlands. There are so many nocturnal beasts of prey, such as civet cats and hill foxes, that a live captive creature has a poor chance, and you probably lose trap and all, while a dead specimen is an ant-eaten horror by morning.

Mammals are scarce in the better-cultivated districts of Yamen, partly owing to the large population, the bulk of which is armed with weapons of precision.

The sportsman will find mountain-hare among the tamarisk, on Sanaa plain, and its smaller, lowland cousin on the inland edge of the Tihama. Chinkara or ravine gazelle occur on the inland plateau, but are scarce and wild.

Ibex are far to seek, and need not be looked for except in thinly-populated mountain districts, particularly toward the south-east. They have ceased to exist in central Yamen.

Conies are found at mid-altitude among the rocks. Leopard and lowland gazelle have already been mentioned.

Baboon range the less frequented slopes at 6000 feet or so, and make well-organized raids on any crop that takes their fancy.

The outraged husbandman seldom gets within effective rifle-shot, past their vigilant outposts. Men credit them with human cunning, and recall the Koranic quotation that cites God's sentence on the sabbath-breakers of Ailah, "Be ye apes and wander wild."

Among the terraced fields, stones are often piled in the rude semblance of human form, and when the crops are ripening, a watchman sits with loaded rifle, in a loop-

holed eyrie, to ward off human marauders by night and the stealthy herd at dawn. Baboon do not raid after the sun is well up, so the watcher gets home to breakfast, and may smoke and drink coffee all night.

The slingers, who ward off the attacks of sparrows from the crops on Sanaa plain, have a much harder lot. They must be on their lofty machan at peep of day, when their chilly fingers can hardly hold the sling, and shout and hurl all day, till the birds go to roost.

It is the constant cracking of their slings, accompanied by guttural yells, that makes the birds so wild on Sanaa plain; but the slinger is a sporting carl, and will hold his hand if he sees you stalking, and tell you where the leverets feed among the lucerne.

While at work in Yamen, the naturalist should bear in mind that he is allowed on sufferance among a rather turbulent population, ruled nominally by a Power that has many difficulties to encounter elsewhere. He should therefore make a point of avoiding local friction, and causing the Government, that has sanctioned his enterprise, as little trouble as possible. Crops should be respected, and his armed escort should not be allowed to pilfer among garden-land. The gift of a few pigeons or a guinea-fowl, properly 'hilalled' in Allah's name, is just as efficacious as a brace of birds to tenantry at home. The Yamen farmer is a sportsman, when he knows his property will be respected.

The naturalist should know the language, and if he has any medical knowledge, and can use it with discretion, he will soon win the confidences and esteem of the district.

As regards his equipment, he must bear in mind that though Yamen is full of illicit fire-arms, openly carried in

defiance of authority, it is difficult to import sporting arms and ammunition for *bona-fide* personal use.

I did most of my work with a double hammerless .410 'collector' (a toy-like weapon, which passed openly through the Customs), and a borrowed 12-bore procured me such heavy specimens as laemmergeiers.

A small rabbit-rifle would have been a great convenience, but the Customs would never have passed it.

Yamen is no sportsman's paradise, but the naturalist will find it interesting. I worked Central Yamen rather thoroughly, and Southern Yamen from the Dthala frontier in 1902. I doubt if there is much new stuff anywhere from Sanaa to Aden that I have not got, but the Asîri country is quite untouched, and will probably remain so until the Turks and the Idrîsi have settled definitely who is to be top dog.

CHAPTER VI

CROPS AND CLIMATE

YAMEN has been noted throughout the ages for its extensive agriculture and general fertility—this refers chiefly to the hills of the central plateau, and not to the maritime ranges, still less to the arid Tihama, which is mostly desert, save where some great wadi cuts its way through to the sea in occasional life-giving spate.

The coastal edge of the Tihama is saline and sterile, though gardens are maintained near some of the larger seaports, by means of constant irrigation from wells.

Inland, toward the foot of the maritime hills, there are broad, arable tracts that depend on the spring rains ; these rains seldom reach the coast, though I have known Hodeida to get a violent rainstorm at this season.

The principal crops of the Tihama are red and white millet and sesame—a low plant bearing oleaginous capsules, from which is extracted an oil, used largely as an article of diet among the natives, while the refuse, after crushing, forms a valuable fodder for cattle, much as our oil-cake.

The soil along the inner edge of the Tihama must be very fertile, for the husbandmen at Bajil, for example, get three successive crops, from one sowing of millet, within the year, though the third crop is often very light and of little use except as fodder.

Sowing takes place after the spring rains have fallen, when a plough can get through the soil.

Among the hills of the maritime range there is little cultivation, except in valleys of considerable size, for along the rocky uplands, well bushed as they are, there is not the soil to cultivate. The population of these hills is too scanty to attempt the extensive system of terraces that marks the higher ranges, nor is the surface drainage enough to justify such an attempt. Millet is the staple crop, as in the Tihama, but sesame keeps to lower ground, and maize is grown largely in the spring, either to be harvested entirely in three months, or cut as required throughout the droughty season.

Rain falls, in these foot-hills, from the beginning of April to early summer, in the form of thunderstorms, which never occur in the forenoon, but usually in the middle of the afternoon, ceasing before dusk.

By June the lower slopes and valley of the maritime hills are thick with crops and vegetation, though burnt brown as an overcooked biscuit during the winter drought.

At higher altitudes, on lofty inland *massifs* and the western scarp of the main watershed, there are spring rains too, but the principal rainfall is in the summer, from June to September, when the heaviest thunderstorms occur. An enormous amount of surface water drains down the principal wadis onto the inland edge of the Tihama, reinvigorating that district, which also gets the margin of these summer storms.

Mountain agriculture differs widely from husbandry in the lowlands. The latter follows the principal valleys, as previously stated, and relies largely on irrigation from flood-water, through channels cut along the banks of the

main wadis. These channels have been traced with great skill and a marvellous eye for level: occasionally they present the striking portent of water running uphill. This occurs as follows: a flimsy barrage of thorny bush and stones is laid across the dry bed of the wadi and, just above this point, a broad irrigation channel will be cut in a gentle slope up the bank, with its intake pointing up stream and its outlet onto the adjacent fields.

When the spate comes down, it is checked by the slight obstacle in the wadi and, during that check, the first shallow rush of the stream swirls up the slight ascent of the intake and down into the nearest field, to be let through gaps in the surrounding *bunds* (or earthen banks) onto successive fields, as far as the supply will hold out. A big spate will of course gather force and sweep over the flimsy obstacle in its bed but, having no great grip on such a barrier, will not carry it down stream. The barrage is left for a future occasion, probably stronger than before, as the flood-wrack will have helped to bind it together. The gaps in these *bunds* are closed at all other times, and a rainstorm may be relied upon to flood each field within its scope; thanks to the *bunds*, the water stands until it sinks into the ground, so each field gets the full benefit attainable.

Agriculture in the mountains has to meet very different conditions. To begin with, the terrain is rocky, and water-channels cannot be cut, as in the loamy soil of the lowland valleys. Then, too, the rainfall is greater, and the tremendous surface drainage, on such hard ground, cannot be handled by the primitive means available to local husbandmen.

Moreover, the soil has been formed under other conditions. In the lowlands, all the larger wadis have



FIELD-TERRACES.

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been bringing down detritus, from the upper heights, for uncounted ages, and this has formed broad, arable belts on either bank. These soil-deposits are permanent, for all practicable purposes, though subject to beneficial renewal by means of alluvial silt during heavy floods.

No such benign influences favour the mountaineer farmer. He has to wrestle with elemental forces that may cover acres of coffee under tons of débris, or skin the surface-soil from his carefully prepared gardens, and dump valuable alluvial deposits beyond the reach of even a baboon.

His only tools are the hoe or mattock, a reed basket, and an empty kerosene tin for carrying water, but these are wielded with skill and infinite perseverance.

It is not too much to say that, in the highlands of central Yamen, every accessible spot where crops will grow has been terraced and tilled for coffee, corn or garden produce. These terraces are faced with stone, and follow the contours of the hill, sometimes enclosing a mere strip some few feet wide, and sometimes an acre or so, according to the profile of the slope. Most of them were built centuries ago, and they are maintained and cultivated by constant toil and vigilance.

Let a mountain-rill but cut its way onto one of these terraced plots from above and, unless noticed and diverted, it may swell, in some sudden storm, to a torrent that will bring an acre or two down with it, into depths beyond the reach of man, or, worse still, deposit the lot onto some other farm. Then the question of ruined crops and ownership of the soil is thrashed out with bitter, and often bloody, feud. Legal procedure, whether Ottoman or Arab, tends to put responsibility where it should be—on the owner of the upper farm.

He may be called upon to defray all expenses for clearing his neighbour's land, beside damages to any crop underneath the landslip, and has also the mortification of having lost a good slice of his own farm.

All these possibilities unite to promote careful and painstaking husbandry, while the large population, and more regular rainfall of the highlands, make such detailed methods practicable and profitable.

Apart from the rainfall, however, the soil of the mountains is not so fertile as that of the lowlands. None of those wild mountain-torrents can be trusted to deposit alluvial silt on terraced ground ; they are far too drastic in their action. Therefore the highland farmer must renew his soil from time to time, carrying it in laborious basketfuls up some mere goat-track, from any deposit he has been lucky enough to find unclaimed. The soil can only be turned over to a limited extent, and a plough can barely reach—still less cultivate—any but the larger and more accessible fields. In the smaller upland plots the soil only lies a foot or two deep, and must be tilled gingerly. The principal highland crops are coffee, barley, bearded wheat, white millet, garden-produce and kât (*katha edulis*), the leaves and tender shoots of which are much in demand for their exhilarant properties.

Animal manure is stored near most of the villages in large heaps, against the stone field-terraces, and deodorized with light soil. It must be used freely, especially for coffee, and is often carried for miles in open panniers on donkey-back.

The lowland farmer can rely on floods alone to fertilize *his* fields, and would laugh at the idea of watering his broad acres by hand, as the mountaineer has to water his coffee and kât in times of drought.



A HIGHLAND FARMER.

To face page 104.

On the other hand the lowlander has no cunning cisterns of cement-dressed masonry, built into steep ravines, to be tapped or closed as required, with a wooden plug and a few handfuls of clay. Along such ravines, these tanks occur at intervals to collect surface drainage, and there is no doubt that on a larger scale, in suitable spots, they would give an enormous impetus to the agricultural industry of Yamen.

The Menakha district, and such isolated *massifs* as Bura and Reima, owe their marked fertility to the fact that—from natural and artificial causes—an adequate amount of surface drainage can be held up and utilized.

Sôk al-Khamîs owes its comparative sterility, partly to the limestone spur on which it stands, but still more to the fact that rainstorms, when they *do* burst over the spur, cause surface drainage that no local resources can deal with. It is not that the western scarp of the central plateau is any less fertile, generally, than the outlying *massifs* mentioned above, for the Ans district—at the head of the Siham valley, along which most of the thunderstorms play—is noted for its coffee, while Sôk al-Khamîs—though within the coffee-growing district of Harraz—does not produce enough coffee for local consumption.

Thunderstorms rage all round Sôk al-Khamîs during the summer, but the actual vicinity has a scanty rainfall.

I have known local husbandmen to approach some saintly mullah, with a view to putting up invocations for rain. The worthy man casts a look round the sky, and, if it seems clear, suggests that the applicants shall pass a day or so in prayer and preparation, and call again.

On the next occasion there is probably a storm banking up, and the law of averages ordains that the district shall

have rain after a certain lapse of time. If rain falls before the farmers come again their good intentions have sufficed, but if not, they walk in line abreast across their parched fields, with the mullah in the centre, all chanting a weird, monotonous invocation, in rising and falling cadence, on two notes. If they get rain all is well, if not, further petitions are indicated, and a goat, sheep or steer (according to the means of the supplicants) is killed on each occasion for the entertainment of the poor. It is first led round with the party, who usually consider themselves poor enough to partake of it later on.

Broadly speaking, the western scarp of the main watershed of Yamen has two rainy seasons, one in early spring and the other in late summer, with a winter storm or two of rare occurrence.

On the eastern scarp, toward the Great Red Desert, the rainy season, such as it is, occurs in the winter, from November to February.

Sanaa plain, and, in fact, most of the central plateau itself have a rather uncertain rainfall the bulk of which is expected in summer, but is often short, and local famines are not uncommon.

Husbandry in Sanaa, and its environs, is largely dependent on well-irrigation, and the perennial brook of Alaf north of the city. Subterranean springs must percolate freely beneath that plain, for, beside the numerous wells in the city itself, there are many outside the walls which reach water at a depth of sixty feet or so.

Eastward of the central plateau the country becomes less and less fertile, though the Mareb district must have been a paradise in the days of the great dam. This vast work is mentioned by the French traveller, Arnaud (who visited Mareb in 1843), as being two miles in length,

across a large valley, 300 cubits thick and 120 feet high. It must have held back a lake of many acres, and Sale gives the depth of the water at nearly twenty fathoms.

It provided the ancient city of Saba or Sheba with water, and irrigated the country for many miles down the valley on either hand, maintaining a high state of cultivation, much belauded, and perhaps exaggerated, by early Arabian writers.

It probably burst owing to some extraordinarily heavy storm, which caused a rapid and overwhelming increase of pressure along the face of the dam. The structure itself had perhaps been neglected by local experts, for it is one thing to build a great work, and quite another to look after it for many centuries.

The memory of that great disaster, which destroyed a city and laid waste a province, may have tended to discourage similar undertakings, for no barrage scheme of any magnitude has been attempted since then in Yamen.

Yet the terrain lends itself to such an enterprise in many districts, and the remains of the great dam still exist to remind men of what has been done, and what could be done again.

The climate of Yamen varies widely according to district and altitude. On the coast the air is extremely damp, and though the sea breezes lower the thermometer, the excessive humidity makes the heat all the more trying to humanity. Heavy winds are prevalent from the sea, north-west in summer and south-west in winter; both are uncomfortably damp; winds from the desert usually bring sandstorms.

On the inland edge of the Tihama, the nights are comparatively cool in the open desert, and though the

days are fiercely hot they lack the enervating dampness of the coast.

Among the hills of the maritime range, days and nights are hot and stifling, though a thunderstorm will always cool the air. Above 5000 feet the nights are always cool in summer or winter, and at Menakha, in winter, three blankets are not too much covering, for there are no such things as fireplaces, and the houses are very draughty. Here driving fogs occur during the winter months—regular Scotch mists that come up from the ravines in early afternoon and lie thick till next morning, and sometimes all next day. These fogs are confined to the maritime scarps of the main ranges, and are unknown at Sanaa. They reinvigorate coffee and crops during the winter drought.

With all this variation of climate, the rotation of crops is naturally erratic.

On the Tihama, ploughing begins as soon as the spring rains have set in, and millet (or dura) is sown directly after, in order to get as many crops as possible, from that one sowing, within the year. Maize comes next and, after that, sesame as soon as the farmer can get his land ready, for all must be sown before the spring rains are over—that is by the end of April. Millet will be ten feet high in June, and ready to be cut in July. It is harvested with a curved, saw-edged knife, stalk by stalk, for each stem is the thickness of a walking-stick, and has to be hacked through. In some districts of the Tihama this crop attains a height of nearly fifteen feet, but such a length of straw usually means light heads. The stalks are used as fodder for cattle, horses, mules and camels.

Grass grows plentifully among the foot-hills after rain.

It reaches the upland and lowland markets in thick, double twists the length of a man's arm.

Maize is ready to cut in three months from sowing, though its harvest often goes on for months ; it ripens irregularly, and much of it is sown late to ensure a supply during the drought. Its stalks are also used as fodder, and the big, enfolded heads are sold green in the market, as a table delicacy. The crop is known as 'roumi' (Greek or Roman), and was perhaps introduced into Arabia during the early Moslem victories against the Greeks. On the coast of the Aden Gulf, which is closely connected with India, it is known as 'hindi.' It is a lowland crop, as is also sesame. The latter is ready to harvest in two and a half months after sowing ; the heads are crushed in a rotating oil-press, operated by a perambulatory camel, blindfolded, that he may keep in his narrow, circular track, oblivious of the outer world.

At mid-altitude (about 4000 feet), millet is still the staple cereal but, above this, bearded wheat and barley compete with it. These crops are sown very irregularly, even in the same district. At Menakha the millet is harvested in the autumn, and even the roots have been grubbed up, before the end of the year, to use as fuel. Barley is sown in the early spring, and is followed by wheat, both being three-month crops ; but Niebuhr, the great Danish explorer, saw barley being cut up at Sanaa on the 15th of July—a thousand feet in altitude will make a great deal of difference to crops in the same district.

Arab husbandmen still use the stars to guide the seasons' toil. This is because the Moslem year is lunar, and the intercalation of a month, every third year, to readjust the solar computation, was condemned by the

Prophet as idolatrous, possibly owing to pre-Islamic, pagan practices in connection with it.

As it is, any given day of the Moslem month moves ten days backward each solar year. Thus, the Fast which enters on the first of Ramadhan, began on August 14th in 1912, and on August 4th in 1913, while it fell on Christmas eve in 1900.

Nature will have none of this, and the Yamen farmer must conform to her. The vast clock of the heavens confronts him every clear night, and all he has to do is to study it and note its steadfast march. The Pleiades he calls *Thariyah*, from a root meaning 'wealth' or 'moist earth' (synonymous terms to him), and when its lamp-like cluster swings low in the west, after dark, he knows that the spring rains are at hand.

When he sees the Ox (*Taurus*) on the western sky-line at dusk, he gets ready to yoke his oxen and start ploughing, for the spring rains have then set in and the ground is soft enough to turn.

The dog-star, rising before the dawn, proclaims the height of summer heat in July, and when the scorpion lifts its curved tail in the south, it foretells hot winds and simooms in desert districts.

At the setting of Arcturus after dusk, he knows the millet harvest is ready (the last harvest of the solar year), and he hates the sight of Orion, which *he* calls the Twins,[1] for it hangs in the night sky throughout the winter drought.

Of all agricultural products of Yamen, coffee is undoubtedly the most important, even in these hard times, with prices dropping in Europe, owing to the

[1] Betelgeux is merely a corruption of Beit al Goz (The House of the Twins).

Brazilian output, while Yamen growers hold tight for a rising market. There is always something doing in coffee, and the local consumption is enormous, though the beverage used by the thrifty Arabs is usually that extracted from the 'kishr' or husk, the berry being kept for the market.

The Yamen coffee-grower has much to do and long to wait before he can hope to get a crop. First he must pluck the ripe 'cherries' or coffee-fruit fresh from the tree, and place them on the flat roof of his tower, to dry in the sun, until the outer husk or *kishr* cracks, and may be easily opened. In doing this he must be careful not to remove the thin inner skin or *endermis*, which envelopes the bean and is essential to its growth. He then selects a patch of ground free from stones, and with at least a foot's depth of good soil. After damping this ground and smoothing it down firm, he presses each bean separately onto the prepared surface, sprinkling them over to a depth of a few inches with loose, fine soil.

Artificial shade must then be erected over the spot. This is usually composed of a few loose stones and branches, leaving an aperture at the top through which the sunlight may fall on the planted surface for an hour daily, or even less in a hot climate. This bed is watered every second or third day, and the coffee-shoots should appear in a month.

The seedlings may be transplanted four months after their first appearance. Greater delay gives a better chance of strong plants, but after a year the young sapling is difficult to move.

The young plants should be set wide in a well-manured patch, each with a depression at its foot to accumulate surface-water. They should not be exposed to the

direct rays of the sun for eight days after transplanting, and should be watered every third day until they have fairly struck.

Coffee, in Yamen, reaches maturity in five years, and attains a height of eight or ten feet. It is considered too old for profitable bearing after twenty years.

A ground-shoot or sucker, from a mature tree, is often bent over to touch the ground, and kept in that position with a heavy stone, the head of the shoot being twisted upwards. It will strike in that position after a month or two, thus forming a fresh plant. The connection with the parent-stem becomes atrophied in due course and may be severed.

The coffee-harvest in Yamen is—broadly speaking—in the autumn, but the cherries on the same tree ripen at different intervals, according to their position on the tree and the amount of sun they get. Then, again, one coffee-garden may be shadowed by some overhanging peak, and another, adjoining it, may be in full sunlight. When we also consider that coffee is grown in Yamen, from the Aden frontier to the latitude of Loheia, and at any altitude between 4000 and 8000 feet, it is impossible to speak with any degree of accuracy as to its harvest.

Local political conditions and financial pressure on growers[1] also cause irregular harvesting, and all this tends to alter the standard of coffee connected with various districts.

Generally speaking, the Harraz district heads the market for quantity and quality of output, and that grown in Ans and Beni-matar (tribeships along the

[1] Most of the small growers have been in the grip of capitalists ever since the last shortage of rain in 1910.

upper reaches of the Sihâm valley) is considered as the highest grade. The other coffee-growing districts in descending order of merit are Bura, Reima, Heima, Hifash and Melhan, which produces a yield considered inferior to all other grades. Taiz is the centre of the southern coffee districts, which send most of their export trade down to Aden, since Mokha ceased to exist as a commercial port.

Cotton is grown on the Tihama belt, in the Beit al-Fakih and Zabîd districts, as also indigo, but neither to any great extent. The only other agricultural product worthy of more than passing mention is kât.

Katha edulis forskali—to give its full botanical title—is cultivated over limited areas, in such districts as suit it, at an altitude of about 5000 feet. It belongs to the *Celastraceae*, of which our best known representative is the spindle-tree, found in the hedges of Devonshire lanes.

Katha edulis was first classified by Dr. Forskal, the botanist, who accompanied the Danish scientific expedition to Yamen in 1763, and died of malaria at Yerîm. It is a standard shrub with alternative, simple, serrate leaves, and terminal panicles of numerous small, white flowers.

Plantations are grown from slips, and tended with jealous care in walled enclosures, for kât has a ready sale, at a high price, in any Yamen market. The tender shoots and leaves, that sprout after rain has fallen, are chiefly in demand, but in drought the confirmed kât-eater will chew the tough, old foliage, sooner than go without. It is packed for transit in small bundles, tied up within a covering of well-damped, leafy twigs, and its price increases enormously in proportion to the

distance it has to be transported, and the existing rainfall.

Neither kât nor coffee are indigenous. Both were imported from the Abyssinian highlands during the Ethiopian invasion of Yamen, before the dawn of Islam. According to tradition, slips of both were planted at Odein, which means 'two twigs.' A beverage was extracted from kât before coffee was drunk, but neither could have been popular in the time of the Prophet, or there would probably have been some mention of them in the Koran.[1]

When abstinence from strong drink was generally enforced, the use of kât and coffee began gradually to gain ground. Coffee soon ousted its rival as a beverage, and seems to have been recognized as a natural substitute for intoxicating stimulants, as its Arab name 'Kahwah' was formerly applied to wine. Yamen traders brought it to Cairo in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and in 1511 it was publicly condemned at Mecca by an assembly of *muftis*, lawyers and physicians, as injurious to mind, body and soul.

In 1513, coffee-houses were wrecked in Cairo by a fanatical mob, and those who kept them were pelted with their broken crockery. The first café at Stamboul was opened in 1554. The Sultan, Selim I., reversed the decree against coffee-drinking, and even hanged two Persian doctors for saying it was injurious to health. But coffee was again to be the object of fanaticism, and became known later on as one of the Four Ministers of

[1] Avicenna and other Arab physicians mention *bun* or coffee in their pharmacopoeia long before coffee was generally used as a beverage by the Arabs. *Bun* is the beverage from the berry, *kahwah* that from the husk.

the Devil, the other three being tobacco, wine and opium. That grim despot, Mowad VI., ordered all coffee-houses to be closed throughout the Ottoman Empire in 1633, and forbade the use of coffee and tobacco under pain of death. Both survived persecution, and made such headway that after 1730, no attempt was made to legislate against them.

Coffee was first brought to England in 1652, by a Mr. Edwards, of the Levant Company, and was sold in Paris in 1672, at half a crown a cup, by an Armenian, whom lack of encouragement drove to London.

Coffee-houses soon became popular in England, and though Charles II. did his best to suppress them, as centres of sedition, his efforts were in vain.

Coffee, infused from husk or berry, is universally drunk in Yamen to-day, and all but the most ascetic are in favour of smoking.

Many districts of Yamen are suitable to the growth of tobacco, but the Regie monopoly prevents its cultivation.

The Yamen farmer lacks many things essential to the better development of his land.

Agricultural roads, which need be but tracks, practicable to camels, would greatly facilitate cultivation. As it is, farm produce and requisites must be carried by hand, or in absurdly small loads on donkeys, which have to be half carried themselves up some of the mountain tracks.

When the husbandman has got his produce to a caravan-route, he is faced with exorbitant transport, unless he is a camel-owner himself, and then there is a question of fodder and maintenance.

To crown all, the caravan-routes themselves are beset by marauders, toward the coast, where his best market

is. So he plods on in his old-fashioned way, with an occasional growl at the powers that be, and, finding his market remote and uncertain, confines himself to meeting local requirements. This means under-production, which brings its own penalty, for any marked scarcity of rain in the agricultural districts entails a general famine, as the people are living from hand to mouth. Centuries of strife, past taxation and present commercial depression, have all tended to establish this procedure, which has become a serious drawback, impairing the resources of the vilayet.

Yamen is fertile enough. Her husbandmen sow sparingly, with Arab thrift, and reap a generous harvest. Durra yields a crop of 140 fold, and in the Tihama, where there are three crops from one sowing, even 400 fold, though this is a maximum.

Wheat yields fifty-fold in the highlands of Yamen, and on the rich irrigation lands of Bagdad only twenty-fold.

Yet with all this prodigality of nature there is not a flour-mill in Yamen, except two small windmills at Menakha, built by the Turks, and used very seldom for grinding soldiers' rations of corn. The vilayet has not got beyond the hand-quern.

And this is the country that imports more than £100,000 worth of foodstuffs during a year of plenty, and more than double that amount in a year of famine.[1]

Yet, during the Italian blockade of Yamen, her inhabitants managed fairly well on their own resources, for farmers realized that the market was in their hands, and rose to the occasion, as did also the Ottoman authorities.

[1] Consular trade report.

The fact that Yamen cannot feed her population is not due to natural causes, or to individual sloth, but to lack of security and combined purpose, for which her administration is responsible.

CHAPTER VII

TRADE AND TRADERS

YAMEN has drifted into a backwater of commercial stagnation; whether she ever wins out into the stream of prosperity again depends on the way her affairs are administered, the responsive energy of her people, and, above all, the financial resuscitation of her government.

Not only is the administration paralysed for want of funds, but the pay of all troops and the civil department is in heavy arrears. Individuals have no money to spend, and the authorities have not the wherewithal to keep things going. Men must live, and the administration totters gallantly on, but the lack of business confidence in public and private life is almost ludicrous. No transport owner of mules or camels will take private baggage on a journey without being paid in advance, and I have known local authorities at their wits' end to collect sufficient transport for the movement of troops owing to lack of cash to pay for it—the Arab camel-owners scoffed at written vouchers.

Turkish officials have drained the vilayet of ready cash, in years gone by, and no scheme for improving its financial position has ever been carried to a successful issue. The present situation is the logical outcome of past policy. Under the Imams, in the eighteenth

century, the monthly revenues accruing from the principal towns of the Tihama have been roughly computed as follows:

Loheia	£600,	Beit al-Fakih	£700,
Hodeida	£300,	Zabîd	£300,

and Mokha £800, with nearly double that amount during the months that Indian vessels called there.

Now Mokha has ceased to exist as a port, and only Hodeida continues to pay any revenue worth mentioning.

Hodeida imports chiefly food-stuffs from India, which are not affected much by the prevailing commercial depression, for folk must eat. A long way behind this most important item come sheetings, cotton piece-goods and yarn, from the United States and Manchester. Petroleum, which penetrates further into Arabia every year, comes from the United States and Russia. Iron and steel for smithy forges are imported from Germany, in quantities that have increased in value from £200 to more than ten times that amount within five years. This is owing to the collapse of native iron, due to the growing scarcity of fuel.

Finally, if the reader will try and imagine all that can be found at a general store in a rural district, and label it Austria or Italy, the rest of Yamen's imports will be roughly represented.

Among such articles which include hard and fragile ware, canned provisions, matches, much sugar and some soap, we must mention bright-coloured blankets and woollen goods, which are much in vogue, and boots and shoes, which are greatly in demand. No man-about-town, or really smart tribesman in the highlands, thinks himself completely dressed without a pair of elastic-side

boots, once known to ribald subalterns as 'jemimas.' These are usually worn *au-naturel*, but sometimes a pair of grey socks are added. When strolling in the tortuous bazars of Sanaa, and on one's best behaviour, to avoid being mobbed as a Christian (in spite of a red tarboosh), it is difficult to preserve a mien of Moslem calm on meeting an elderly, armed tribesman wearing such footgear, with a short kilt, thin, bare legs, and *spectacles*, which he has picked up somewhere as a charm against the evil eye.

The only exports from Yamen worth considering nowadays are coffee, sheep and goat skins, and bullock hides.

Coffee has always been considered the mainstay of Yamen exports, but it is at present ousted by skins and hides. Enhanced risk of transport, owing to the hazardous state of the caravan routes, has made growers chary of sending their produce down to the coast. They know that they can store it indefinitely up-country, but not down at Hodeida, where the damp would damage it in a month or so. European merchants at Hodeida know this too, and, with an anaemic market subject to frequent spasms by cable from the outer world, they handle coffee very gingerly. France is their best customer, the United States next, and Great Britain a bad third.

Skins and hides, on the other hand, always command a fair price if properly selected. Skins are exported far in excess of hides, and go to New York, Marseilles and London, to be made up into gloves and fancy leather.

Hides are bought by weight and skins by the score. The latter are graded by the European merchants according to weight, size and quality, for the simple pastoral Arab knows quite enough to stitch up cunningly

any accidental cut, and rub it with mud to make it look like a natural crinkle.

Skins and hides are often in the market when there is no coffee to be had, as the former come largely from Asîr, where the roads are safer for native traffic than in Turk-governed Yamen.

Though blackmailing brigands play the dickens with traffic on the coastal stretch of the Hodeida routes, they think twice before interfering with Asîri caravans. The Turks are sensible enough not to molest Asîris in Hodeida, realizing that trade *is* trade whoever brings it, but the tribesmen from that revolted province always come prepared for the worst, and armed to the teeth. A caravan from Asîr is well worth watching on its way into the open market—an expanse of sand on the outskirts of Hodeida. The tall, unkempt camels slouch along, tied nose to tail, in one long line, beneath mountainous bales of skins, for such merchandise is light and bulky, packed in tribal style. On the loads, one may sometimes notice all sorts of weird loot from former battlefields, brought to Hodeida in the hopes of converting it into cash or merchandise. I have seen the horn of a gramophone, an officer's sword and Ottoman overcoats. No questions are asked, for Turkish kit is scattered all over Yamen, from a variety of causes. Such caravans are escorted by frizzy-haired swordsmen, armed, too, with modern rifles in addition to the universal 'gimbiah' or curved dagger.

The camels flop down in a loose cluster on the sand, close to the sea, on the north side of Hodeida, where the European merchants have roomy 'arishes,' or thatched, stockaded sheds for storing skins and hides. The loads are unlashed and promptly swooped upon by

the ever-watchful native brokers, while the few Europeans concerned hold aloof with studied dignity, but a vigilant eye for the market and each other, leaving their brokers to fight out the first quotations, which are merely preliminary.

The final stages are fought out between man and man in rather an ingenious manner. The broker, having got bed-rock quotations from the caravan folk, hies him to the European who is his best client, and enters his office with an air of inscrutable detachment. There is no privacy in the office of any Hodeida merchant, who must keep in constant touch with his surroundings, and there are far too many keen ears about to blab the state of the market for general information. The broker takes the European's hand, and, throwing a corner of his robe over their two forearms, begins the real negotiation.

The points of the market are indicated by the fingers of the hand. The index finger is one, the forefinger two, up to the little finger, which is four. The whole hand is five, and the index finger (bent to distinguish it from 'one') is six. Seven is the index and forefingers together, eight the next finger with them, and nine all four fingers together. These points cover all likely fluctuations of the market, whatever the quotations may be. The European of course knows within a few points what the market should be, and to what limit he is prepared to go. It is an amusing game to watch. You see the enveloping mantle agitated, as if it held a brace of ferrets, and the European smiles and shakes his head. Then there is more agitation and the white man protests emphatically, for the broker is trying to get hold of the wrong finger. Also, he may force the wrong finger on

his client, and if that is clutched and held in mistake for one representing a lower numeral, the error is an expensive one when camel-loads of skins are involved: a little care and dexterity in ascertaining how many fingers there are on *each* side of the indicating digit is an adequate safeguard.

The European works up and the broker down. If, and when, the two prices coincide, the bargain is ratified over coffee and cigarettes, and the broker goes off to arrange delivery.

It is a complex business for the European, who buys hundreds of skins at so much a score, and then has to sort them out in grades at various prices for export. Yet skins and hides are coming steadily to the front, and coffee is taking a back seat, owing largely to insecurity of transit and political unrest. Unlike all other produce, skins and hides do best in time of drought, for stock must be killed when fodder is scarce.

Local industries are moribund, thanks to the financial slump and over-seas competition.

The dyeing industry of Zabîd has been dislocated by tribal disturbances, and much of it has been transplanted to Hodeida, where there was already a small, similar industry. There it continues steady, in spite of an increasing tendency to use synthetic indigo from Germany, instead of the home-grown product which the Zabîd district used to supply.

There is also a colony of weavers at Hodeida, many of whom have come in from the disturbed area between Beit al-Fakih and Zabîd. They weave a coarse, cotton cloth in stripes of black, red, green, and white, on a long, narrow loom. This cloth is retailed in lengths suitable for shawls and kilts, as worn by the natives.

There are some small dhow-building yards south of Hodeida, along the beach, where a few such craft are usually in hand or being repaired. The Yamen dhow or 'sanbuk'—used for transporting cargo to and from vessels in the roadstead—is about fifty feet long, double-ended and sharp prowed. The mast is sturdy and comparatively short; it rakes forward, carrying a big lateen sail on an almost perpendicular gaff of great length and well tapered. The rudder is operated by tiller ropes leading direct to it, well below the water-line, from either gunnel. Such a craft will take at least three months to build, and cost £100. Stem and stern posts, knees and ribs are made of up-country acacia—a very hard and durable wood—but the planking comes from the Malabar coast, and the supply is uncertain. Seams are served with hot pitch and cotton waste.

Sea-going dhows are built on the same lines, but larger, with a small mizzen-mast well aft, raking forward as the main-mast, and also lateen-rigged.

They are decked fore and aft, and the bulwarks, along the open waist, are often temporarily raised with strips of matting to keep the seas from breaking inboard. Passengers berth aft, under an awning on the raised poop.

It is a fast build, and seaworthy in spite of its outlandish look. Beyond the dhow-yards, southward, there are a few limekilns, where neat circular stacks, some fifteen feet high, are built up in alternate layers of coral and firewood, from a pit that receives the burnt lime. This industry is strictly limited by the fuel supply, which is brought from a considerable distance inland.

Hides are dressed and made into sandals at most of the lowland centres, and sheepskins are soft-tanned for

'poshteens' in the larger towns up-country, where cheap European boots are preferred to open sandals on account of the cold.

There are few minerals of potential value commercially.

Rock-salt occurs plentifully at Salîf. The flourishing salt works there are under the control of the Ottoman Public Debt.

Gold is said to occur, and no doubt *did* in ancient times, though most of it was brought by south Arabian traders from the Indies. An Imam of the eighteenth century tried to introduce a gold currency, but foreign gold coins had to be melted down to make it.

Copper and sulphur have been found scattered scantily over a wide area, but the sole available supply is imported now.

There is a certain amount of native iron, coarse in fibre, and brittle. The scarcity of fuel makes its smelting impracticable, for coal is only found in insignificant quantities, while wood fuel gets scarcer every year, owing to reckless deforestation, and hardly suffices for domestic purposes.

Among the hills round Sanaa fine stones are found, such as agate, chalcedony, onyx and cornelian.

Petroleum has long been known to exist in the Farsan Islands. A concession was granted to an Ottoman subject to work it, but, beyond experimental borings of doubtful issue, nothing was done before the Idrìsi seized those islands in 1912. The Turkish flag again flies there now, and perhaps the opportunity may be taken of conducting more definite operations for oil. Whatever happens in Yamen, the Turks ought to be able to protect a working party on Farsan group, unless

they again fall foul of a Power in a position to blockade the Yamen coast.

Two things are essential before any serious attempt can be made to develop the resources of Yamen: she must have an adequate harbour, and easy transit between that harbour and her larger towns.

The local authorities have always recognized the importance of these two factors, and at a very early stage in the Ottoman occupation commenced the road that links Hodeida and Sanaa. This, however, is of more strategic than commercial value, for its surface and gradients forbid ordinary vehicular traffic, and even camel caravans avoid its mountain passes, preferring longer but less arduous routes.

The history of public works and enterprise in Yamen is a gloomy one.

From 1902 to 1908, stone jetties and a breakwater were being slowly constructed at Hodeida, and not until their completion did the authorities find out that the water was not deep enough to allow loaded lighters to come alongside and discharge—the *raison d'être* of the whole scheme. The contract had been given to a French engineer, but he sublet it to an Italian, who did the actual work. That futile undertaking cost nearly £14,000.

A condenser and ice-machine were installed at Hodeida in 1907, capable of distilling ten tons of water and making three tons of ice in a day. The plants cost over £2000, and were imported by contract with an Italian firm. Both seem permanently out of order and are no longer used.

Then the Ottoman Government conceived a more ambitious project—perfectly sound in theory—of con-

structing a harbour for Hodeida, which has only an open roadstead, with an exposed anchorage for steamers three miles off the beach. The proposed site was ten miles north of Hodeida, where there is a deep, natural inlet, protected by a long spit, which projects boldly northward and is known as Ras al-Katîb (Shingle Point).

The scheme was to give a five-fathom anchorage to a dozen vessels, beside providing a stone quay where three such vessels could tie up and discharge simultaneously.

All this was only part of an undertaking, since known as the Hodeida-Sanaa railway scheme.

The harbour at Ras al-Katîb was to be linked up with Hodeida by a metre-gauge line running inland to Obal and up the Sihâm past Mefhak to Sanaa, thence to Amran. This involved 200 miles of track at a total cost, including harbour, of two millions sterling. A concession and contract was issued by the Ottoman Ministry of Public Works and a French syndicate was formed to handle the enterprise.

A preliminary survey was completed in April, 1910, when the original scheme was found too expensive, so another survey was organized to make alternative traces to Sanaa from the coast *via* the Zabîd valley and Dhamar, also southward along the Tihama past Zabid up to Taiz and so onto the central plateau through Ibb, Yerîm and Dhamar to the capital.

At the same time a strong party of continental engineers came out to commence construction at Ras al-Katîb.

Izzet Pasha cut the first sod in March, 1911, and the railway was pushed forward from Ras al-Katîb before adequate arrangements had been made there for the disembarkation of heavy material. When war broke out

between Italy and Turkey, the Italian engineer in charge of the enterprise was replaced by a Frenchman, who seems to have had friction with his staff and the local authorities.

At the end of 1911, the consulting engineer came out from France and reported most unfavourably on the work done. He stated that two million francs' worth of material at Ras al-Katîb had become mere scrap-iron, that the harbour had not been made or linked by rail with Hodeida, and that nearly half of the funds allotted (which were less than a million sterling) had been expended. This report, in conjunction with the Italian blockade of the Yamen coast early in 1912, decided the Directorate in Paris to shut down and cut their losses.

The net results, as I saw them in the summer of 1913, comprised some 8000 tons of railway material conveyed by steamer to Ras al-Katîb, and valued at three million francs. Most of the heavy stuff had been dumped on the beach for want of an adequate jetty or cranes to handle it, and the lighter material was stacked in the open. There were some well-constructed buildings of corrugated iron for quarters, offices, etc., all in good condition. About five miles of rusted, single track extended from the temporary jetty at Ras al-Katîb toward Hodeida, and on it was a locomotive and two passenger coaches, about three miles out from the dépôt. A low embankment had been constructed for another ten miles across the tidal flats of the coast and into the bush, curving inland a mile north of Hodeida and running parallel with the up-country caravan route.

It is not for me to criticize an undertaking that lacked neither zeal nor ability, but it is permissible to consider the causes of failure for the guidance of similar ventures.

The climate down on the coast is hot and damp, detrimental alike to personnel, labour and material. The native labour procurable was absolutely unaccustomed to such work and required the closest supervision, while the local government, which did its best for the enterprise, was itself in difficulties.

In view of the known engineering problems inland, too much was attempted with the capital available, and proper facilities for discharging cargo at Ras al-Katîb should have been the first consideration.

Stone for the jetty was not procurable locally, but had to be brought in dhows from the mountain island of Zoukar, at considerable delay and expense. If the line had been extended another twenty miles across level country to Bajil, unlimited stone could have been got there. It is easy to be wise after the event, but a preliminary scheme, ensuring a decent harbour connected with Hodeida, and the linking of that town with Hajeilah, among the foot-hills, would have been feasible enough, for there is no great engineering difficulty *en route*, and the entrance to Ras al-Katîb lagoon is already thirty feet deep.

Rail-head would then have reached the foot of the mountain road to the interior. A good round sum spent on that road would have vastly improved it for traffic, and the scheme might have shown a working profit. It would have been time then to consider its further extension.

As it is, the Turkish Government has dropped a lot of money, and those who tackled the enterprise have burnt their fingers. All this tends to discourage similar undertakings in future.

Before the affairs of Yamen can be placed on a sound

commercial basis, her currency and customs must be overhauled: both are enough to drive a brisk business man frantic.

The gold coin of the country should be the Turkish pound, but that is getting as rare as a Great Auk's egg. The English sovereign is accepted readily where gold is known at all, and the French Napoleon is also in circulation. Without talking about coins which no longer exist, or are purely imaginary, there are two opposition silver standards in Yamen. One is the Austrian Maria Theresa dollar, known as the rial, and dear to all Arabs as good value for the money, being as big as a four-shilling piece, and worth about half that sum. The other is the official *medjidie* dollar of Turkey, worth about three shillings, or as many piastres as you can get for it—it has dropped from 20 to 17 piastres in the last few years. This used to be the only legal tender, and the importation of the Austrian dollars was officially prohibited, but Arabs, outside the large towns, will not take the *medjidie* except as a gift, and then they look at it doubtfully.

Even the local authorities have to make all payments in rials, and eventually withdrew the prohibition against them (July, 1910).

The Theresa dollar is now accepted in payment of tithes and other dues, and the post and telegraph offices do not refuse it, though they penalize it with an exacting rate of exchange.

Small silver is represented by two-piastre and four-piastre pieces. The piastre is a nickel coin, divided into four copper *hilal*. No other coins are worth serious commercial consideration. Relative values vary considerably, but you can usually get ten Theresa dollars

for an English pound, and twelve piastres for a dollar, though a sovereign is quoted at about 112 piastres. I always considered a Theresa dollar as a florin, and had nothing to do with *medjidies* unless I wanted to buy stamps.

Hodeida merchants use Indian rupees as currency, and base their exchange calculations on the value of a hundred rials in that currency. This rate comes from Aden and is fairly stable.

The bane of a merchant's existence at Hodeida is undoubtedly the *gamrak* or customs. A complicated system of cross-checking, between the various officials, merely tends to make the whole procedure cumbersome, without being any safeguard, for systematic book-keeping is unknown. No official statistics of trade are ever published ; the customs cannot give the required data.

Until 1907 imports paid an 8 per cent. duty *ad valorem*, exports to foreign countries 1 per cent., and exports to places in the Ottoman Empire 2 per cent. That last remarkable tariff was not abolished till November, 1909.

Since June, 1907, imports pay 11 per cent. *ad valorem*, of which 8 per cent. may be paid in kind, with a rebate of 10 per cent. if cash is tendered. The remaining 3 per cent. must be in cash without rebate.

The 1 per cent. duty on exports to foreign countries is payable in cash or kind.

Inland revenue now depends solely on *ashûr* and market-dues ; the latter go to the local municipality, and are 10 per cent. on all produce sold, a piastre on every goat slaughtered and 10 piastres on every bullock.

The *ashûr* or tithes are the modern counterpart of

the alms which the Prophet ordained as compulsory on all Moslems. They were levied originally on all fixed incomes, merchandise, land-produce, and live-stock, at a rate varying from 10 per cent. to 2½ per cent.

The revenue accruing was allotted as follows:

⅔ to the poor,
⅑ „ relief of temporary distress,
⅑ „ the collectors,
⅑ „ relief of honest debtors,
⅑ „ ransom of invalid slaves,
⅑ „ Jihad or Holy War,
⅑ „ the repatriation of strangers,
and ⅑ for rewarding infidels' services to Moslems.

In organized Moslem states the *ashûr* have lost all their original character, and are just plain taxes with all the unpopularity attached. In Yamen they are only levied now on assessed value of crops, at any rate below 10 per cent. that can be extracted, and only when they can be enforced.

The assessment alone causes friction, and the actual collection often requires the co-operation of a battalion and a machine-gun or two. All tolls, transit dues and inland *octroi* have been abolished by firman as a concession to the Arab population of Yamen.

This concession deprived the authorities of any local revenue for the upkeep of roads and the security of caravan traffic ; two important commercial factors.

Local officials do their best under very trying conditions, for the situation requires constant tact and delicate handling. The prevailing commercial depression is due to the action of their predecessors, and lack of adequate financial support from the central government at Stamboul.



A MARKET IN THE FOOT-HILLS.



A TIHAMA DANCE.

To face page 133.

CHAPTER VIII

NATIVE LIFE

THIS chapter is an attempt to describe the natives of Yamen, from a more intimate standpoint than that of the ethnologist, and deals with their mode of life and habit of thought.

It is always difficult to get at the back of an Oriental's mind; his point of view on any subject, and, in fact, his whole outlook on life, vary so widely from European standards.

In Yamen the difficulty is much increased by the mutual suspicion between Turk and Arab—the legacy of oppression on one hand, and bloody reprisals, not unmarked by treachery, on the other. "Never trust an Arab," say most Turkish officers who have been long in the country, and quote the case of Ahmed Rusti.

Ahmed Rusti was a Turkish officer of distinction, who held an administrative appointment at Dhamar a quarter of a century ago, and had, by his drastic methods, incurred the enmity of the local tribesmen.

In his absence, on a tour of inspection, certain Arabs managed to introduce large stores of gunpowder into the basement of his house. This could easily have been done without the knowledge of the hapless family, who tenanted the upper storeys in harem-like seclusion, but the native servants must have been in league with

the conspirators. The coarse, black, Arab powder was brought in charcoal sacks and stored in the basement, where large reserves of fuel are often kept in up-country households.

A time-fuse did the rest at dead of night, when the family slept and the faithless servants had scattered to their homes. All that awaited the stricken husband and father at his frantic home-coming was a shattered ruin and a few tattered scraps of humanity.

Ahmed Rusti re-entered military service and was killed in action shortly after, at Loheia, fighting in the forefront of the battle with all the *abandon* of one for whom life has nothing more.

Arabs, on their side, can point to deeds of callous tyranny and brutal suppression wrought by the governing race. Even in districts where Ottoman rule is paramount, country folk glower at every *tarboosh* they see. Townsfolk are moderate men as a rule, for they have no *ashûr* to pay. They dwell at administrative centres, where they can see the machinery of the Government at work, and it must occur to them that every effort is being made now to keep the country quiet and avoid friction. At least they realize that the Turks are no worse than their former Imams and have guarded their lives and homes in time of stress, though the citizens of Sanaa seem to have forgotten that.

With Imam and Turk outwardly friendly, yet covertly jealous and watchful of each other, it follows that a discreet Yameni will commit himself to no definite statement, on any political or social subject, unless he knows his man, for he feels that he may be haled before Ottoman officialdom for sedition, or incur some recondite penalty of the Islamic code.

My work as a naturalist necessitated long sojourn in outlying villages and lonely towers, with daily excursions in secluded districts, attended by an escort that learned to accept me as part of the scheme of things, while my slender medical knowledge brought me into touch with the countryside.

Such a life affords more opportunities of studying native character than consecutive travel over a wide area, and previous years among the tribes of the Aden hinterland have taught me what one may believe, and what one is wished to believe.

The daily life of the people—though far less complex than ours—is so self-contained that one may live for weeks in the midst of it and not grasp its fundamental features, still less its details.

At Hodeida, and most coastal towns, there is a large mercantile class busily employed in their own operations, and with little time or inclination for the wider affairs of the vilayet. The Sheria weighs little on them, remote from the Imam's seat of government. They regard the Turks as their natural protectors against possible raids by such warlike neighbours as the Asîri or Dheranik. They deplore government's inability to cope with existing disorders and so establish security of commercial transport, but are prepared to make the best of things as they are, including the local climate, which is an affliction in itself.

At Hodeida, the wealthier classes live in tall, white houses, and pervade the sandy streets in flowing robes, silk waistcoats and expensive turbans—all imported from Europe or India.

Almost every important house has on its flat roof an *arish* or two—frame huts or lean-to's of matting and

reed, in which the principal members of the household sleep at nights, during the hot weather. These structures give the houses an unkempt appearance, like a man with a battered straw hat, but houses that have not got them, or some compensating advantage of position, must be an inferno to their inhabitants.

Throughout the stifling night one hears the fractious wailing of feverish children and, at dawn, when the sea-breeze faintly stirs the muggy air, one sees at barred, upper casements, little naked figures stretching forth brown limbs to catch the slightest coolness.

Food, among the native upper classes on the coast, is much as that on the plains of India. Rice (imported) is a staple article of diet, with well-seasoned curries.

The poorer population eats flat, circular loaves of unleavened bread, with sesame oil or *ghi*, and lives chiefly in the vast maze of stockaded *arishes* beyond the precincts of the original town. Hodeida was once walled, but the remains of that wall are not easy to find.

On the beach to the south are the huts of the fisher folk, who spend their nights till early morn in patient, watchful toil. Then they go straight to market with their catch and, according to their luck, they will spend the day on the beach, mending their nets and dozing in the shade of some stranded dhow, or take their ease in Arab cafés listening to the professional story-teller with his pauses for a fresh collection at critical points in his narrative, and the street musician, with his plaintive pipe and rhythmic tabor. Sometimes they join in droning native song, usually an amorous and quite unprintable ditty of local tradition. In these cafés you may also find tribal visitors to the town—a floating

population with no fixed address, who come and go unquestioned and avoid intercourse with strangers. Half of them are from outlawed or insurgent tribes, and some are freebooters from desert tracts, intent on learning the movements of caravan traffic.

Stevedores ply their calling all day, wading out up to their armpits to *sanbuks* moored off the customs jetty. They handle sacks of corn and rice, and big, sticky packages of Bussorah dates done up in matting. Their loads are kept clear of the slight swell, if possible, and if not, well, what is the use of making a fuss about a little salt water? Up the tide-washed, wooden steps they go, and off, at a short-paced run, to the customs weighing machine where the tallyman does his work, and other porters take the loads in to bond.

Huge iron-bound bales of European fabrics are handled with more ceremony—half a dozen men get under one of them, alongside the *sanbuk*, and move shoreward cautiously, with linked arms, admonished by warning yells from the consignee on the jetty. Once on terra firma, the bale is rolled along with much effort and thunderous bumps, its menacing bulk cleaving a way for itself through the press of humanity on the jetty.

These stevedores are a class in themselves—cheery souls, with an arduous manhood and a rheumatic old age, if they ever reach it. They beguile the monotony of their toil with song, one taking the solo and the rest murmuring the refrain. I heard such a gang once loading cargo for a Syrian (or Shami) broker. The soloist kept up a spasmodic chant of fundamental ideas, while the chorus ejaculated an allusion to the shipper at the end of each line:

O / Allah / cash
Waugh! you Shami
Tired / wet / and hot
Waugh! you Shami
Coffee / tumbak / ease
Waugh! you Shami

The soloist went on to describe the most intimate details of their employer's domestic life, to which an appreciative chorus shouted the tag.

Mechanical appliances for handling heavy goods do not exist, and street porters may be often seen staggering along with an iron girder, or a heavy baulk of timber, slung low from cross-bars which the men bear across their shoulders, two and two, with the load between them. This requires nicety of adjustment and co-operation, or naked toes will suffer.

The men move at a short, shuffling pace, gasping the name of God in unison, to which a single voice adds an improvised supplication:

ALLÀH
be with us always
ALLÀH
and guide and guard us
ALLÀH
our trust is in Thee

and so on.

If the chant stops suddenly, you may know that the load has taken charge and dropped, involving a bare shin or two.

This procedure compares favourably with the one used in Christian lands, wherein the name of God is not taken until something untoward happens—and then in vain.

Away from coastal towns, on the arid plains of the Tihama, pastoral clans range and settle, as grazing and

water dictate. They build huts among the scanty bush—wigwam-like structures of matting on a few poles—the black goat-hair tents of the inland desert-dwellers being seldom seen in the Tihama.

These huts occur in clusters, for the Tihama shepherd must form communities for mutual defence against the prevalent lawlessness of the maritime plain.

Simple furnishing is the rule, for the whole camp may have to trek for many miles when the grazing gives out or the water supply fails. There will be a rickety charpoy or two, a few gourds for sour milk, some conical-lidded baskets ornamented with cowries and holding pantry stores. If the head of the household is at home his rifle and bandoleer will hang on a peg, well away from the low-arched entrance, ready for chance marauders. There will always be a primitive hookah, made out of an empty coco-nut, and two hollow sticks. This, with the coffee-pot of blackened, fireproof clay and several small bowls of green glazed earthenware, complete all the paraphernalia essential for entertainment. One family, one hut ; and there is no attempt to separate the sexes, for all are within the degree of relationship which the Koran forbids to intermarry.

The parents sleep on the charpoy. In a large family there may be another charpoy for the older girl-children, and the rest sleep on the floor. Females of all ages wear a long slip of navy-blue cotton, and sleep in it, merely taking off their bead necklaces and covering their feet with a shawl of the same colour and material as their dress, which is used as a hood by day.[1]

[1] Hill-women wear a shorter slip and trousers of similar material, fringed with embroidery and reaching to their ankles. The collection of firewood is *their* staple outdoor occupation, and they have to climb wearisome distances to get it.

Male adults sleep with their coloured cotton kilts still belted on, often wearing their curved daggers, while rifle and ammunition are close at hand in case of night alarm.

The boys ungird the piece of cotton fabric, which is their sole garment, and giving it a comprehensive downward flick with their toes, sleep under as much of it as there is.

The entrance is closed with a piece of matting, and there are no apertures to serve as windows, which would merely let the sand in during heavy winds. Close quarters for all ; but they have the open desert to range by day, and on hot nights may sleep in the open—I did.

The men go to the nearest market town, with their few camels, when they have skins to sell, and bring back grain, salt, coffee-husk, spicery and tobacco, which, with stinking sulphur matches and kerosene, make up the marketing of a pastoral settlement on the Tihama.

Meat they have and milk, *ghi* too, or liquid butter, to go with their unleavened bread, for meat is by no means of an everyday dish.

The elder women do the cooking, and the younger ones bring water from the distant well, which is usually a longish journey, for it is not pastoral etiquette to camp anywhere near a well, lest flocks and herds foul the water. On their return, some of them must turn to and grind corn for the day's meal. This is arduous work, for grazing camps have no rotatory querns, which would be too heavy to carry about on trek. The corn is slightly moistened, and then triturated on a concave stone with a stone spindle which is grasped at the ends with both hands, and rubbed to and fro over the concave surface. The girl has to kneel to her back-breaking job, and sings cheerfully most of the time. They have a 'song of the

quern' which I could never get hold of, for when questioned about it they just giggle, and the men don't know it, or say they don't.

Coffee-husk, ginger, and a little cardamom are ground together in the same way, to make the beverage dear to all Yamen Arabs.

Meat is cooked in an earthenware jar, with a handful of herbage to close the mouth, or in a copper stew-pan, if the family can afford it. There is a Tihama method of stewing meat with 'howaig' (black pepper-corns, cinnamon, and nutmeg pounded with *ghi*), which makes an excellent dish. By some culinary cunning, meat, however tough, is made tender, and the startling blend of condiments gives the raciness of oriental curry, without its unbridled fervour.

The children of both sexes tend the flocks and herds from dawn to sunset, when they drive their charges home to a fold of thorn bushes, or a mere open 'steading' between the huts.

A hard life it is for all, and a grim one too, when the grip of drought will not relax and the scanty scrub withers far afield, and goats and even sheep must be killed before they die of inanition, and there is no milk for any one.

And even when the rare rain has fallen, the fresh-sprouting scrub brings another anxiety, for this is the season when those who have lost much stock in the previous drought endeavour to replenish their herds by raiding. The peace of a starlit night may be shattered by the flash and rattle of firearms, and the men of the little community must seize rifle and bandoleer, and slip forth into the darksome desert to battle for their means of livelihood.

The husbandmen, who live in scattered villages on the inland edge of the Tihama, are in better case, for no one can come by night and lift a field of standing corn, but they, too, dread the drought, when the rains refuse to leave the hills, and crops wither as they stand. They often envy their more fortunate neighbours along the greater wadis, which bring down water after heavy rain has fallen in the hills and fertilize the land.

These valley men have their trouble too, for their homesteads are easy of access, and, when the crops are well up, the Turkish tax-collectors are sure to visit them, while locusts—if on the wing—always seem to come their way *after* the assessment has been made.

Grumbling is the privilege of agriculture in many lands, but the Yamen lowland farmer has some real grievances. Transit to market for his produce is very unsafe, and blood-feuds are so rife on the maritime slopes of the foot-hills behind him, and on the Tihama itself, that he never knows when he may not be 'potted' while ploughing, in a quarrel he has never heard of. Two well-known bad characters from the coast were shot at Bajil by *zaptieh*, on duty, while attempting a burglary. This involved a blood-feud between their tribe and that of Bajil district, making the route to Hodeida unsafe for any Bajil man. The local government is powerless to prevent these feuds, though it does its best to avenge reprisals on its representatives for acts committed in the course of duty.

The denizens of the maritime foot-hills have it all their own way. They are chiefly pastoral, and have little land-produce worth taxing, while they are usually remote from feasible routes, along which an outraged government might strike.

Their stone towers and 'shielings' will stand a lot of knocking about, and even a mountain battery can hardly get within range of them. These outlanders commit occasional depredations, but, if within reach of the Ottoman arm, avoid serious outrages that might justify the expense of a regular expedition against them.

Native life on the upper heights—be they detached *massifs* or part of the main inland watershed—contrasts sharply with that prevailing below 4000 feet.

The terrain is far more fertile, and devoted almost entirely to agriculture. The population is much denser (for a given area will feed a greater number of people) and more settled (for movement among those soaring peaks is difficult). Stone for permanent buildings and field works is available everywhere. With every tower and village a stronghold in itself, by build and position, the local folk feel more secure against each other and outsiders, and have not always to be on the *qui vive*. Blood-feuds are not popular here. To begin with, you can't murder a man with any degree of comfort and security in a populous neighbourhood, with a tower full of folk (all agog at the sound of a shot) on every salient peak. It is also difficult to dispose of the body on rocky ground, with every bit of soft soil under cultivation and frequently visited by somebody.

I would not say that the upland men are less blood-thirsty than the lowlanders, when really roused ; in fact, their past history seems to indicate the contrary, but they can't be bothered with unprofitable feuds, which 'upset' the younger men and play the very mischief with methodical agriculture.

The mountain farmer, as we may call him to distinguish him from the lowlander of the foot-hills, or the

plainsmen of the Tihama, is the backbone of Yamen, whether you regard the numerical proportion of his class, its stability, prosperity or economic value. The highland agriculturists of central Yamen are practically the only part of the population that contributes to the inland revenue of the vilayet. They do not like to, and only do it under compulsion ; in fact, the turbulent husbandmen on Mount Reima have recently 'bottled up' a district-governor on their heights, and may have slain him by now. I sincerely trust not, for the man meant well, and only wanted to get some tithes out of them. Unfortunately, neither he nor his escort were big enough for the job. This time last year (April, 1913), tithes were being collected up there with a battalion of Ottoman infantry and two field-guns.

The sons of the soil, whose history is a kaleidoscope of shifting dynasties, regard Turkish rule as a mere ephemeral incident, for the Turks have never tried to identify themselves with the land, or with those who till it, and now are unable to get in touch with, or control, events. They have long looked on the agricultural class as a milch cow, and now the cow has kicked the pail over.

The farmer in the Yamen highlands is a methodical, self-centred, placid type but, when he gives current affairs his attention, he is a power to reckon with.

Every village is a fortress in itself ; one that guns can batter perhaps, but guns have first to get within range—no easy matter, even for a mountain battery, anywhere off the road.

I recall many such eyries perched on hills well away from any recognized route, and with no possibility of attaining a position from which they might be shelled, except by goat tracks, which hostile riflemen would beset

from ideal cover among the boulders of well-nigh inaccessible slopes.

All such villages have certain features in common; they stand on an already difficult crest of bare rock, from which rises a lofty rampart, composed of loopholed towers, joined continuously by 'curtains' of masonry wherever any gap occurs between them. Thus, the garrison of the outer towers actually live at their posts. The towers are built up rapidly rising ground toward the centre of the village, where the 'keep' of the local chieftain rears its battlements above all the others.

I paid several visits to such a home, to attend the village chief for eye-trouble.

I was escorted through the massive main door of the village, up a street of slippery rock, commanded from a hundred loopholes, to an iron-studded wicket of remarkable solidity. After a long, corkscrew climb up dark, stone steps, lit only by occasional loopholes, I reached an inner chamber, carpeted with camel-hair rugs in black and cream stripes, with somewhat dingy cushions round the walls.

In the centre were one or two tall hookahs of ebony, inlaid with silver and brass—the true old Sanaani work.

Leaving my collector-gun among the rifles of the escort at the door, I slipped off my hill shoes and moved across to my patient, who always received me at one of the narrow, low-set casements, made so that a man may fire down from them without exposing himself.

Coffee was always made in the room for the party, in a dark copper flagon, big-bellied and narrow-necked, such as once held a genie. A youth would appear bearing live charcoal in a brazier of fireclay, on which were arabesques in red, white, and black. A white metal

tray, with a pedestal-foot, held tiny white china bowls, which our host filled with amber-coloured coffee, flavoured with cardamom. When the hookahs were gurgling in full blast, the talk became general, for my escort was composed of local men known to the old chief, and I then had leisure to look at the view through the open casements.

The village stood at the head of an awesome abyss, that was terraced for coffee a short distance down, and then dropped almost sheer toward the lowlands, which swam in a thin blue haze some miles away, and about five thousand feet below.

In all other directions visible to me were rugged peaks and spurs, surmounted by similar strongholds. This one was probably as accessible as any, yet I should have felt very serious about guiding a mountain battery within range of it, for the only feasible track lay through rocky gullies, commanded from above. Infantry would have to advance across an absolutely bare plateau, right up to the village, and, even if they forced an entrance, would find themselves in a death-trap among those tall, loopholed towers.

In the one direction I could not see, I knew that the plateau rose to a precipitous bluff, and along the foot of that bluff ran the Hodeida-Sanaa road. This is far below and out of sight of the village, but not out of mind, for the local riflemen could creep to the edge of the plateau and terribly harry a column of route.

I have also seen, near Sôk al-Khamîs, isolated towers, so massive that Ottoman guns had only chipped the upper works, and, in one instance, a tower that had been evacuated by night, then seized by the Turks and fired. It was completely gutted from top to bottom, and stood

six stories high, yet the structure itself was intact and showed no sign of what had taken place within.

The Turks have shown they can fight their way gallantly through hostile Yamen, keeping to a made road and shelling every stronghold that would dispute their passage, but it is a much more difficult undertaking to subdue the highlanders in arms.

There are no civilians, except the mechanical classes, and Jews in large centres. Modern arms and ammunition are readily procurable and, at the first sign of trouble, everyone cuts in for all he is worth, if the game is only of sufficient interest to him.

The authorities have never taken a census in Yamen, but the combatant population of the highlands may be reasonably estimated at a quarter of a million. That is why Turkish rule only follows the road, and is often a very narrow riband even there, while it is powerless to enforce its will over a wide area.

I have mentioned the Jews. I am sorry to say that I know very little about their inner life, for they are timid with strangers, and mistrusted my armed escort. The Turks have freed them from many restraints,[1] which will probably be re-enforced now that the Islamic code has once more got a grip on the vilayet. They are only found in the towns and larger settlements of the highlands, where I have known entire villages populated exclusively by them. Every male adult pays an annual capitation tax of one rial. The fighting Arab has a good-humoured contempt for them, but respects their skill and industry, and would be loth to do them harm. It is the townsfolk who give them a bad time, recognizing

[1] They are still not permitted to build their houses more than two storeys high.

the power of their commercial rivalry. That is why Jews are leaving Sanaa just now. They are seldom found in the towns of the Tihama, and never beyond the Yamen plateau, eastward. Here the pastoral life recurs, and becomes more and more nomadic toward the vast inland desert. Raid and counter-raid are frequent, and the Turks have no control. When Glaser, the traveller, went to Mareb, through Turkish territory, he had to take a local escort. That was in the 'eighties,' and the Turks had far more hold then than they have now. What little I know of these regions was acquired on my previous journeys through the Aden hinterland, and is given in another place.[1]

In Yamen, however, I have frequently met men from Nejran—the ancient Christian diocese. Christianity is merely a half-forgotten tradition to them now, and they are Moslems, knowing very little of their past history. Still these folks attracted me in spite of their uncouth Arabic, for they lived on the border of the Empty Quarter. More than one affirmed that caravans—few and far between—arrived among them, at rare intervals, from the Eastern sea (presumably the Persian Gulf) by way of the Reml or Sand—their word for the Great Red Desert. They declared that these hardy travellers had not taken the long and comparatively easy route, skirting Nejd and down the great Dawâsir valley, but came right across the desert, arriving in haggard state, with gaunt, half-dead camels. These were fast, well-picked animals when they started, for my informants derided the idea of any mere baggage camel doing such a journey, with the waterholes some days apart.

That vast unknown tract (presumably of desert) has of

[1] 'The Land of Uz' (Macmillan).

course no bearing on practical politics, but the great trade-route of Wadi Dawâsir, with wells at convenient distances all the way from Nejd (the biggest independent Arabian power in the peninsula), should have some interest for the authorities.

Yet the Turks know even less than the British about these regions, where forces may yet be generated to drive them headlong.

It is not much more than a century ago that the Wahabite movement burst forth in Nejd, to spread fire and sword and ruin in all directions. Signs are not wanting that the next great movement from this quarter will be political, and of even greater import to alien authority than the fanatical wave of Wahabism.

The Yameni is not fanatical. He has his own religious views, but realizes, from the sects into which his own people are divided, that there are at least two sides to every religious question.

He is a patriot ; and who, indeed, could help loving a country like the highlands of Yamen, in spite of past and present woes? His patriotism, however, does not blind him to the fact that his local rulers have done and can do little for the welfare of his country. He would gladly throw off his present yoke for any change of government that promised more stability.

Yamenis have frequently declaimed to me on the blessings of British rule. While agreeing, I have always pointed out that my country would not take theirs as a gift under existing conditions. There can be no greater mistake than for a Christian to believe, that just because the Moslems he meets praise his government and institutions, they would brook either. The Italian 'agents' committed this error in Tripoli. On all sides

the Tripolitans inveighed against the Turks to interested listeners but, when the matter came to be tested in the crucible of war, the Italians were surprised and not a little annoyed to find that the indigenous population changed its previous attitude.

It will always be so where Christians and Moslems are concerned. They admire our administrative methods, but they do not want *us*, and are amused and horrified at our social code.

Any system that would give Yamen a stable Moslem ruler, with British administrative control and enterprise, as in Egypt, would be popular enough, though there would be trouble about taxation at first. The tribesmen think that they should not be taxed. Under their Imams they were exempt, but gave military service if called upon, provided they did not disapprove of the quarrel in hand. This system is an absurd anomaly under organized rule.

Yamen wants many things; among them a licking for her outlaw tribes, while her law-abiding folk would do well to remember that no government would guarantee their safety and immunity of goods, without exacting a *quid pro quo* to feed the machinery of administration. Tribal governments level such exactions on all their civil population, and often fail to carry out their side of the bargain, as the system of tribal military service is too unstable for the maintenance of public security.

The Turks exact tribute where they can, and maintain order *if* they can: their methods are not successful.

The Yameni is not a difficult type to handle, really, though the vicissitudes of his administration have made him a bit cantankerous. He is always open to convic-

tion, and is as shrewd as they make them, in the ordinary details of his daily life—be he farmer, shepherd or trader —yet impracticable in great issues, because he cannot see their trend. He is no coward, and has often shown himself ready to die for his ideals, when once he has been convinced of them. While clannish and always ready to support his class, he displays an appalling ignorance and a callous lack of interest as regards the welfare of his fellow-men, due, no doubt, to his self-centred life. His ideas on the healing art are barbarous, though his country once gave great physicians to the world.

He believes that the best treatment for a bruise, from the kick of a mule, is cautery with a heated mule-shoe. I once had a patient on my hands for a fortnight, after such treatment, and, even when I had put him right, he half believed that the chief cause of the mischief was that a fore shoe had been inadvertently used instead of a hind shoe.

I have seen withered limbs simply due to the puncture of a red-hot needle for rheumatism.

There is a vague idea that coffee is a good antiseptic, and a little boy was once brought by his mother to me, with a huge Yamen ulcer on his leg, full of coarse poundered coffee, and in a shocking state. Even infants are not well looked after, though they suffer more from ignorance than actual neglect. My wife had to attend cases that showed a lack of elementary instinct on the part of the mothers. Too much is left to the will of Allah—an excellent trait within reasonable limits, but Providence can be overworked.

I remember a child of two who used to play in my quarters, at the top of a mountain fortress near Wasil. He *would* lean out of the open casements, which were

low enough for him to take a header through. I used to grab him by the tail of his only garment, and shout for someone to come and look after him, as I was very busy. I warned his mother of the risk he ran, and she quite agreed with me, adding, "We lost his brother like that last year."

Yamen Arabs should be fairly free of ailments (except in the Tihama, where the climate is unhealthy), for they are moderate eaters and teetotallers.

Unfortunately, all but the poorest classes are addicted to the kât habit, more or less; the degree of addiction being in proportion to the amount procurable. I have already described this plant. The leaves and tender shoots are chewed for their exhilarant properties. At first there is a pleasurable sensation of intellectual ability, and parties of kât-eaters will sit up all night discussing anything and everything. By-and-by the habitué finds himself incapable of clear and consecutive thought without the herb, and its deprivation engenders much mental discomfort and nervous irritability. Further addiction induces marked symptoms such as constipation, insomnia and, finally, impotency. The teeth are much affected, becoming permanently discoloured and loose, for the gums become flaccid. By this time the victim of the habit is incapacitated for real thought or efficient work by any accidental deprivation, which is bound to occur at intervals, for the supply of kât is by no means regular, and it will not keep.

In cases of slight addiction, the only marked failing is that of memory, and many who thoroughly enjoy kât, but can only get it in small quantities at long intervals, are very little affected. There is, however, always a certain mental 'fuzziness,' even after a short

bout; the natural reaction after a strong, nervous stimulant.

I have frequently eaten kât, when offered to me in audience, at the courts of certain sultans in the Aden hinterland. It has a somewhat bitter, but not disagreeable taste, and the only after-effect I noticed was slight insomnia. Other Europeans say the same, and I never yet heard of one who liked it. The Turks never become addicted to it.[1]

I have had several cases of habitual addiction through my hands, usually in advanced stages, when suffering the pangs of deprivation or alarmed at their own symptoms. I cannot point to a single permanent cure, though I have been able to afford temporary relief, and sometimes to frighten my patient off the habit for a considerable time. All those who indulge in kât admit its bad effects, but say they cannot do without it.

It permeates every class that can afford it, and many that cannot, for sometimes a man will starve himself and his family to get it.

Women do not often succumb to the vice, and when they do are worse than the men, for they have less self-restraint, and it makes them very irritable. Besides this, theirs is a hard enough life even without that handicap.

Kât finds its way along the trade-routes of southern Yamen into Lahej: the principal households in that town are devoted to it, and there is quite a commotion in the market when a kât-caravan comes in.

By the time it reaches Aden, where it is soundly taxed, its price has put it beyond the reach of the average native,

[1] Perhaps those who use alcoholic stimulants at all fail to notice the subtleties of kât. The few Arabs who drink are not addicted to the other vice.

and it cannot be exported, for it would not stand a voyage.

In the Aden hinterland it is only grown near the southern frontier of Yamen, and the tribesmen, as a rule, will have nothing to do with it. They sometimes stop kât-caravans, tear open the neatly-tied bundles of the delectable herb, and strew it along the route in Allah's name. This is when they are at loggerheads with Lahej, where the blow is felt full sorely.

During all the years I have known the Aden hinterland, I never saw anything like the general addiction to this vice as I have met in Yamen, during the last year or two. There, the habit has become a serious social evil, undermining the mental and physical health of the native population ; the foe alike of thrift and industry.



A HARD ENOUGH LIFE (p. 153).



SOME POWERS THAT BE.

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CHAPTER IX

THE POWERS THAT BE

YAMEN is now under dual control wherever any government may be said to exist.

The Vali is responsible for her administration to the Porte, yet the civil and criminal law governing her native population is an anachronism, wielded by nominees of the Imam, who has thus a great influence on private life and public affairs.

Let us first consider this dignitary and his *entourage*. The most curious thing that strikes the mere casual traveller at first is the mystery in which he is veiled. I remember being checked by a cautious Commissioner of the Anglo-Turkish Boundary Commission, 1902, for casual mention of the Imam at mess, lest the ill-omened word should be wafted across the frontier to our hostile friends the Turks. They *were* hostile just then—their native outposts even fired on our Commissioners when out for a stroll, and the jaunty excuse was given that it was a custom in the Imperial Army, on field service, to fire on anyone approaching their post. Ottoman regulars even chased a harmless naturalist like myself, when out their way to pick up a few upland larks, and I had some difficulty in getting my specimens home. One could understand them *then* feeling a bit touchy about the

Imam for, somewhere up north among the Yamen hills, his followers were in arms against them. Now, however, all that is changed, for the Imam is the ally of Turkey, receiving the support of Ottoman troops and, incidentally, a personal subsidy of £T. 1000 per mensem. Yet the sense of mystery is kept up, and to mention the word 'Imam,' at an official audience in Yamen, is worse than talking about Salonica. The very air seems charged with intrigue, and everyone looks uncomfortable. One would almost imagine that the alliance was not a subject of congratulation.

The only people who *do* discuss him unrestrainedly are Turkish officers, in the freedom of their own quarters. Once, in such an environment, I expressed a hope that the Imam displayed zeal and ability in the welfare of the vilayet, as a return for the princely salary he drew. "He!" chorused my hosts, and an officer just back from service at Khamîr added, "He just sleeps and eats, and drinks coffee." I gathered that he took no very active part in the affairs of the vilayet, beyond receiving reports from his nominees and adherents, which should keep him in touch with everything that goes on. He never smokes, lest he should offend the strict Moslem prejudice of his more fanatical supporters, and conforms to all the rigours of Islam. His capital cannot be a very bright place to live in ; service there is most unpopular among officers and men of the Ottoman army, for the little indulgences dear to the cheerful Turk—Moslem though he be—are strictly forbidden there, and all have to be on their best behaviour.

Every officer I have met, on his return from service with the Imam, has described himself as 'shabaan,' or fed to repletion (in a psychical sense). "Sanaa is bad

enough," said one. "With everyone on the look-out to see if you take something with your coffee, and you can't smoke a cigarette out of doors, during daylight, in Ramadhan." He conveyed to me the impression that Khamîr was the absolute limit. "Allah knows I'm no drunkard," he remarked, "but I *do* like a drop of cognac now and then, when I can get it, for it is good for the stomach and keeps the cold out; Islam does not forbid alcohol as medicine, but to have even an empty bottle in your possession will get you into trouble at Khamîr."

At this point I produced my only bottle of brandy, kept for medicinal purposes; the case seemed to indicate it.

Khamîr stands high, and is colder than Sanaa or even Menakha, which is very bleak at times. I know an Ottoman official who was held prisoner there for months, and he suffered intensely from the cold. He told me that there was a weekly market, and that folk were in the habit of buying enough meat then to last them the whole week. I know of no other town in sub-tropical Arabia where that could be done, especially as Moslems will not touch meat that is at all tainted.

The Imam's is an ambiguous position. He *must* keep in with the fanatical, tribal element on which his power depends, and yet he probably realizes—being a clever man—that mediaeval methods do not suit modern Yamen. Nevertheless, he has to pose as the champion of Islam, if he means to hold his militant followers together. The economic part of the population in central Yamen would never see him through if he got into trouble with his vassal tribes, and so he cannot be expected to go out of his way to consider *them*.

Again, it does not do for him to appear in any way Turcophile, yet he draws a good round sum from the Ottoman Government every month, which is paid when due, whoever else goes short. The *entente* costs the Porte £T. 30,000 yearly, if we reckon in the payments made through the Imam, to his vassal chiefs, in order to keep them quiet. This large expenditure may or may not be essential to Turkish rule in Yamen—the Turks must think it is or they would not pay it—but it is certainly the basis of the Imam's sway now.

The fact of the matter is that he is less powerful on the side of government than he was in opposition. He has no marked ability as a soldier or administrator. As the rightful though persecuted ruler of Yamen, and the direct descendant of Ali, he meant much to all Arabs, but not as a protégé of the Turkish government, which he now is.

He is a middle-aged man of undoubted attainments, in fact, his theological scholarship is widely recognized, and he is surrounded by men of learning. Whether these qualifications and advisers stand him in good stead when he has to deal with the affairs of a turbulent race, is another matter, but they come in useful to him as head of the law.

Very exaggerated notions prevail about the power of the present Imam, due, perhaps, to the trouble he gave the Turks a few years ago, when those who called upon his name swarmed in from outland districts to grapple with the Osmanli.

Neither he nor the Turks tolerate casual callers at Khamîr, where he must, perforce, adopt an anti-Christian attitude, so I have had no opportunity of meeting him personally.

His failure in 1913, either to cope with the Idrìsi or come to terms with him—though backed by the Turks—does not speak well for his strategy or statecraft, and the fact that the Turkish troops have to support him is not a testimonial to his temporal power.

He must, however, wield some influence in Yamen through local chiefs, who are in touch with him to an extent in proportion to their distance from Khamîr, and through the *kadis* he nominates to administer the code.

The Vali, on his own admission, wrote to him, when my wife and I were at Sôk al-Khamîs, asking him to arrange that we were not molested. While there, I saw a circular letter from him, addressed to the local chiefs, urging them to observe friendship with the Turks, and abstain from acts of violence. It was written in red ink on inferior stationery, headed with the crescent, and bore the Ottoman official seal, familiar to all who have ever seen a piastre. It was signed

Yehya who trusts in God
Emir of the Faithful.

Letters of similar import were sent to all chiefs of Yamen proper, in the summer of 1913. Except as interesting mementoes of an illustrious personage, they seem to have had little value, judging by the present state of affairs, for Yamen is no more proper now than she was then. As for our two selves and our safety at Sôk al-Khamîs, the local population, having once ascertained that we were not Turks, received us in friendly fashion.

I was quite interested, while up at Sanaa, to observe the attitude of the varied population, when the Imam's judicial sway was ratified by firman. The Arab town blazed from end to end with flares of kerosene-soaked

waste, along its lofty towers. The squat houses of the Jews were in darkness for some time, as if their occupants were wondering how they stood in this affair, and then were lit up in frantic haste, as if some one had come along and kicked them into a proper state of patriotism.

The Vali's residence was illuminated in style, and every other Turkish home in our quarter remained wrapped in gloom.

By now the average citizen of Sanaa looks on the Islamic code as an antiquated nuisance. It is cumbersome and irksome to him, as armour to a man-about-town. He never *did* take to it kindly, centuries ago, and now it is getting a perfect bugbear.

The excitement of tracking down infringements of the code is beginning to pall—two can always play at the same game, and between them make life for either hardly worth living. Religious dogma has never been Sanaa's strong suit—she has always been a big business centre, and would be again if she were given a proper chance.

Nowadays the Sanaani trader cannot do big business unless he is in touch with European merchants at Hodeida, dealing in European goods. This means bills of lading, per contra accounts, credit on invoice, and the usual machinery of civilized commerce. Unless the Sheria is applied with reasonable gumption, our trader fetches up against one or other of its clauses at every turn. The mere fact of an ordinary business conference with a Christian merchant down at Hodeida, is quite enough to set a rival on his track when he gets back to Sanaa. "What was he doing down there? Business with that tippling unbeliever?" Cigarettes and coffee would have been handed round in accordance with the custom of the country. "Of course the coffee contained

the forbidden spirit (they have heard of liqueurs). Kafir! Infidel! O sin! O damage!" and off someone rushes to lay information.

That is the worst of the Sheria; it has got to stretch if it is to cover the conditions of modern life, and where it stretches it inevitably tears, for the fabric is old. Through such rents any vice can crawl and rouse the tribal militancy of outraged Islam.

Yamen farmers had no delusion about the code before the firman, proclaiming its official recognition. It had already been revived, and the highland husbandman does not like to have his prayer-times too closely checked. He has to be up at dawn, and the dawn can be very sharp, at several thousand feet above sea-level, before the sun has warmed the air. Prayer means certain ablutions. Some of the more luxurious agriculturists have a little water warmed for their lustrations, by their women folk, who are always up betimes, as coffee must be prepared before their men go to the field. Prayers are then said in the comparative warmth of the guest-chamber, by all adult males present, making the prescribed prostrations in unison, and timing the last one to coincide with sunrise. This is correct beyond all cavil, but the poorer husbandman, whether he tills his own soil or that of another, has to leave his stone shanty at dawn, and go to work in air that is downright frosty. He gets later and later with his devotions, and I have often seen a man dabbling away on the edge of a garden tank—previous to prayer—when the sun had already waxed hot. Sooner or later some busybody comes along and derides the efficacy of such belated devotions, calling shame upon him and threatening further measures. In time he shirks ablutions and prayer, and he needs both. Nor

are the myrmidons of government free from the general mania for supervision. While I was at Wasil, half a dozen Arab gendarmes put up at the village caravansary on their way down to the plains on duty from Menakha. They arrived tired and jaded just at sunset, and did not pray. They were 'spotted' by some traders travelling up the road on mules. These men pressed on to Hajrah and laid information before the Kadi of Menakha (who resides there), and then retired to rest as men who have performed at least one good action that day.

Messengers arrived at Wasil before dawn from head-quarters with peremptory injunctions to the local chief to bring all six men up at once to stand their trial. I saw him just before he started with the delinquents, and the things he said about the Kadi, busybodies in general, and even the Sheria itself will not bear repeating. "And," he added, as a culminating grievance, "those dogs of informers neglected the sunset prayer too."

The gendarmes were let off with a light fine of 1½ rials each (about three shillings). They wasted three or four days of duty while my friend had an arduous journey at a time he was not fit to leave home, all for a matter that the best Islamic standards agree to leave to conscience, for the men were entitled to the Koranic exemption as 'people of the road' or travellers.

Religious revival is desirable in any religion that contains, under whatever form, the basic principles of morality and spiritual truth, but this is not so much the object of those who wield the Sheria in Yamen as temporal advantage.

Even the Idrìsi is not above using the code as a means of crushing possible rivals. The only other man

in Asîr whose influence he really feared was one Ahmed Sharif Pasha, who resided at Sabbia for many years—an Arab with Turkish sympathies.

A covert struggle for supremacy has gone on for a long time between the two, but the last I heard from Asîr was that the Idrìsi's myrmidons had seized the Turcophile, and brought him, bound hand and foot, before the popular leader, who charged and convicted him of offences against the Sheria. Both his hands were cut off, he is said to have been bereft of his property and family and was deported from Asîri limits. I heard of him early this year in Cairo. He was passing through on his way back to Yamen, and the shipping agent who booked him told me that 'there was something funny about his hands.' The unfortunate man had been to Paris, where artificial hands were fitted to him. He is now at Hodeida, enjoying the protection and confidence of the Turks, which he perhaps deserves no more than the barbarous penalty inflicted upon him.

All this manœuvring for position does not guarantee the fidelity of the big militant tribes which make and unmake rulers. The Hashidi, for example, have declared partly for the Idrìsi and partly for the Imam. Defections either way occur with the ebb and flow of local politics, though the whole tribeship is unanimous in disliking Turkish rule.

And what of the Turks, who are doing their best to maintain a decent semblance of order, in spite of political unrest and inadequate support?

The vilayet of Yamen, as previously stated, is governed by a Vali, with headquarters at Sanaa. Under him are *mutasarrafs* or governors of the larger towns, *kaimakams* or sub-governors of lesser districts, and

mudirs of still smaller townships, with control over a very limited area.

I have already described the girdle of Turkish dominion in Yamen. These officials are all within reach of a feasible route, and are, metaphorically, threaded like beads of various sizes on the telegraph wire when that is in working order.

Turkey is not represented in districts where she cannot support her representative, and, as it is, missions detached for administration or diplomatic purposes to remote parts of the vilayet usually get into trouble, and sometimes cannot be extricated.

Let us glance at telegraphic communication in Yamen —always an important strategic factor in a country of big mountains and bad roads. The obvious weakness of such a link is that in time of real stress, when it is most wanted, it is almost bound to be cut. The Turks know this well enough, and have a provisional chain of military signalling posts, which could maintain communication between Hodeida and Sanaa in emergency so long as these posts were adequately held.

There is a double wire from Hodeida to Sanaa, one for local messages and the general public, the other a trunk line for State messages. This reaches the outer world from Hodeida *via* Beit al-Fakih, Zabîd, Hais, Mokha, Sheikh Said, and across by a short cable to Perim.

This wire was intact when I was last at Hodeida in October, 1913, but it could be cut at any time, for it traverses turbulent territory for many miles quite beyond the protection of local authority.

There is also a telegraph line from Sanaa along the plateau through Dhamar, Yerim and Ibb to Taiz, and

thence down to Mokha, but this line is not at present in use.

Hodeida is still in telegraphic communication with Loheia, by land, and a wire branches off from this line to Salif, and thence by a short cable to Kamaran Island, where there is an international quarantine station for oriental pilgrims.

The public is not allowed to use code or cipher. Messages between Hodeida and Sanaa may be in French. All other inland messages must be in Arabic character, and are often mutilated beyond recognition.

The telegraph service in Yamen is not well paid. Assistants get from £T. 3 a month, an operator in charge at a small station gets £T. 5 or so, and a superintendent at Hodeida or Sanaa may get £T. 150 a year. All are required, on joining the service, to take an oath on the Koran not to divulge the contents of messages. I take it that this refers to State telegrams, for a message of particular interest that reached me was known in the settlement before I got it; in fact, I was told of its contents, with the wire still unopened in my pocket.

To send a wire from a wayside station requires tact and diplomacy. If you just fill up a form and leave it, with the cash, the operator will perhaps feel hurt, and your telegram may lie for days under a paper-weight on his office table. Go in and discuss the matter with him over a cup of coffee, and you will find him courtesy itself. While you smoke a cigarette or two he will ring up your station, tick off your message, and—what is more—get the receiving station to tick its acknowledgment. The rest—as he will tell you—is in the hands of Allah. I once got an answer to a reply-paid wire between

Hodeida and Menakha on the same day, and have never known it later than the third day after transmission. The postal service has already been mentioned. It is tolerably efficient, but has not to handle any great mass of correspondence, most of which is Turkish, though there is a certain amount of Arab business letters between Sanaa and Hodeida. While at Menakha I found that all my mails reached me, and although at first some of it was often over-carried to Sanaa, it always came down again. Unpunctuality was largely due to the irregular steamboat service between Aden and Hodeida, for the Ottoman Government in Yamen *will* not pay a mail subsidy.

During the Balkan war, I was much struck by the dearth of news that reached the public in Yamen. I do not except Turkish officials or officers of rank, save those at headquarters up at Sanaa, perhaps. In fact, the Arabs knew more of what was actually going on, as many of them got Egyptian papers.

After a while, Turkish officers were disgusted with the mythical accounts of Ottoman victories in journals they got from Stamboul. When I was in camp near Sôk al-Khamîs I used to receive Reuter's telegrams, through the courtesy of our vice-consul at Hodeida—a typed copy of the world's news in brief, issued by the Eastern Telegraph Company at Aden. This was recognized as an unbiassed source of information, and soon after its arrival I was the centre of a spell-bound circle, listening to news of their own land. I gained much unmerited *kudos* by prophesying the reoccupation of Adrianople and Kirkilisse, an obvious strategic probability based on my European news ; I even named the day. This long shot came off, and a few nights later



A SOWARI.



ARAB GENDARMERIE.

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we saw Menakha all aflare with lamps and torches, thirty miles away across the hills.

News of Turkish reverses or successes left the bulk of the Arab population cold, though there was a certain amount of frothy talk from some of them, which did not indicate their real feelings, and was, I think, meant to hide them.

In mountainous country I have occasionally seen vultures perched aloof on the rocks, watching some sick and moribund beast with coldly critical eyes, devoid alike of expectancy or curiosity; just watching for the opportunity that they know must come. Such is the attitude of the neutral population in central Yamen toward Turkish rule.

Ottoman officialdom in Yamen depends entirely for its dealings with the native population on Zaptieh or Arab gendarmerie. They it is who convey administrative orders to the people concerned, do their best to smooth the thorny way of the tax collector, act as intelligence agents, keep order in the bazars, carry messages, and escort travellers and convoys entitled to the protection of government.

The corps musters four battalions, with headquarters at Sanaa. Two battalions are scattered throughout the vilayet, on duty at various centres, one is held in readiness at Sanaa, for service in any direction, and the fourth is on permanent duty in the metropolis itself. They are all upland people recruited from tribal families.

There is also a battalion of mounted gendarmerie, known as Sowari, of which one company is at Hodeida, two companies on detached duty, and the fourth at headquarters at Sanaa. These men escort officials of rank, the Ottoman mail, and, in the Tihama, all such as are

entitled to an escort, for the maritime plain is no place for mountain infantry. In the lowlands they are rather a mixed lot. Among my escort on the Bajil stage there was usually a Sudani from Darfur, who called himself a British subject. In the Hodeida company (with a detachment at Bajil) many are mounted on saddle camels, as more suitable to the fierce heat and sandy plains of the Tihama. The rest ride ponies of fourteen hands or so—hardy beasts of nondescript strain—Abyssinian or Somali, with a dash of real Arab. The best nag I saw in the vilayet, with any real claim to breed and shape, was a compact little Jaufi[1] that used to carry the genial Turkish chaplain up at Menakha.

In the Zaptieh, a man should get twelve rials a month, an umbashi or corporal thirteen, and a shawish or sergeant fifteen. Every sowari trooper should get thirty rials a month, but has to find his own mount and feed it —that costs him ten rials a month, and more in time of famine. A sowari shawish should get thirty-five rials. A sowari has to replace his mount if it dies or becomes unfit for service, so he does not get much of a pull over the infantry gendarme.

A malazim or subaltern of gendarmerie gets £8 a month, and a captain (yozbashi) £12. Each battalion is commanded by a bimbashi or major, and all four are under a colonel (miralai). I do not know the pay of the higher grades.

All these rates of pay are good enough if only they were *paid*. Last year the pay of the gendarmerie was six months in arrears, during which time half a month's pay was granted, and an issue of new clothing. The

[1] A cross between Jaufi stallions and Turkish cavalry mares gives a good light charger-strain well suited for service in Yamen.

uniform is a dark blue turban, kilt and jacket, with plain silver buttons, but the men usually wear the ordinary tribal kilt of unbleached, native fabric.

It is a shrewd stroke of policy to keep them always in arrears, for their fidelity to the existing régime is thereby guaranteed to a very great extent. Men will stand by a government whose fall would involve their back pay. Still the idea can be overdone, and patience pressed too far. I saw a good deal of the poverty to which these men were reduced last year. The battalion for emergency service up at Sanaa did not do so badly as a big detachment of them were on escort duty with the Vali on the Asîri border for a month or two, and would not leave Sanaa till some of their arrears were paid.

The battalion on duty in Sanaa also gets a bit on account, for it is in a position to make itself unpleasant, if goaded too far; but the men on detached duty, in outlying districts, are kept very short. There are not enough of them together to organize and enforce some adjustment of their grievances, and if they *did* combine they are too far from headquarters to get at the men who matter.

The straits to which the local gendarmerie were reduced last year had a very bad effect on discipline and were unworthy of an organized government. My own small escort did not feel the pinch quite as much as the others, for they got a piastre a day each from me, and the umbashi in charge two piastres, paid regularly. This slender allowance kept them going, and there was considerable competition to get on my escort, though a man was never changed unless the local authorities wanted his services, or he proved unsuited to my requirements, which seldom happened.

Though not in Yamen to doctor folk, I sometimes attended a case in my spare time, if unable to visit me. If the household was affluent, my escort—knowing that I refused fees—would get food there, and sometimes, I fancy, touch the master of the house for a loan. I winked at this, for I knew the position they were in. Local merchants had long since refused to accept a voucher from any gendarme on his back pay, not because they mistrusted the man's integrity, but because they doubted whether government would ever meet its liabilities.

As adult Moslems, all gendarmes are usually married, and most have families to maintain. The sowari feels it worst of all, for he has his mount to feed as well.

The Arab gendarme is not a bad type, and fulfils his duties as well as can be expected, but these chronic arrears of pay do not tend to maintain his efficiency or his respect for the government he serves.

While in camp at Sôk al-Khamîs, I had to interfere in a wrangle between one of my escort and the son of the local mudir. The man was required to go on duty down to Mefhak, and help collect transport from the Arab camel owners in that district, for a battalion that was coming up the road: he refused to go. The mudir's son came to me and said that his father required the man's services. "By all means," I replied. "Give your father my salaams and say that the man is at his disposal." "But he won't go," complained the youth. "I will if *you* order me," remarked the delinquent, looking meaningly at me. I was not going to disorganize the escort I had trained for my needs to play the entirely unauthorized rôle of a government official, so replied that it was not for me to give orders outside my sphere

of authority. I reminded the mutineer of his bread and salt, but this was an unfortunate remark. "If I could only get the bread out of them," was his pointed rejoinder, "I wouldn't bother about salt." This closed the discussion, and the man remained master of the situation.

Later in the day I sat skinning the morning's 'bag,' when the culprit came up, salaamed, and apologized for his obduracy.

"Not my affair," I rejoined, "but if you shirk your duty with me you will hear about it. What kept you from going? Sloth?"

"Never," was his indignant reply, and then the truth came out. He was the son of one of those camel-owning Arabs, and was expected to use his influence to get the transport, which could not be paid for just then. "My people," he added, "disliked me joining the Zaptieh at all, for my father wanted me to stay with him, and help convey merchandise for folk up and down the road; sooner would I be a one-eyed camel walking round an oil mill. The old man laughs at government employ. I'm not going down there to tell him that the 'dowlah' wants camels, but can't pay for them."

There was trouble with those camel owners, during which some were knocked about, and the transport was snatched back into the foot-hills out of Ottoman reach.

The training of Zaptieh is theoretically sound, but in practice falls short of the standard originally set.

Every gendarme is supposed to have been through a course of training with his battalion at Sanaa, where battalion commanders, who are Turkish officers of rank, see to it that the men are trained. In actual practice only the leading sections in each company have been so

trained, which would not matter so much if the various sections kept together, but they are scattered all over the vilayet.

Among my escort at various times, I have noticed and tested men who are efficient soldiers, intelligent, good, natural judges of distance, and sound on discipline and *esprit de corps*. On the same escort, there would be others who had never been trained with their battalion, had no idea of combined tactics, and could not even read the vernier on the tangent sight of their rifles. But I am bound to say that all had good eyesight, an instinctive knowledge of cover, and sure-footed activity on rough ground ; these are natural gifts of the Arabian mountaineer.

Their weapon is an early pattern of Mauser, with a tubular magazine under the barrel, holding eight to ten cartridges, according to the condition of the spiral spring actuating it. The weapon throws a flat-nosed, lead bullet in front of a heavy charge of black powder, which makes a good deal of smoke—a serious drawback in mountain warfare.

It is a bolt action, and the calibre is about that of the old Martini. A long triangular bayonet goes with the weapon, but is never used or worn by the Zaptieh, except under compulsion when training up at Sanaa.

At Menakha, shortly after the arrival of a new captain, the local company of Zaptieh was marched out every Friday, before noon-day prayer.

It was an exhilarating spectacle. All available men of the company walked in several lines abreast, with rifles sloped, holding on with the disengaged hand to the man next them, in order to preserve their formation. They moved at a majestic pace, yelling at the top of



RETURN OF ZAPTIEH TO THE HUKOOMAH AT MENAKHA.

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their voices a chant improvised by some gifted poet in the front rank. As he passed fresh couplets along, between the stanzas, all would lean inward to pick up the words.

Behind the command rode their yozbashi—a scholarly Arab in Ottoman uniform and spectacles—and with him the kaimakam of Menakha in civilian attire.

Once clear of the town, they straggled out with a concourse of civilians, in a go-as-you-please walk for two or three miles along the road, to a point where the shoulder of the giant spur afforded a natural butte across the head of a deep ravine. A couple of men ran round and put up a few stones as targets along the face of the cliff, and haphazard firing commenced.

The shooting was not bad, but there was no attempt at supervision or instruction, which merely meant that those who could shoot well, did, and those who could not, didn't shoot.

Then they all walked home again, and dismissed tumultuously opposite the Hukoomah.

This was the established military procedure of Arab troops in Yamen, under their Imams, long before the Turks took hold.

The Arab is nothing if not conservative, and though he can assimilate modern drill, always reverts to his original methods when he gets a chance.

The mischief is that the subordinate officers of the corps are not professional soldiers, as a rule, but local men chosen for their knowledge of office routine and the machinery of taxation. They are well versed in their civil duties, but are not the men to foster soldierly qualities, nor does the individual welfare of their command concern them. I remember a handsome young

gendarme, on my escort at Wasil, who had been married not long before he joined my party, and used to pen laborious letters to his wife, whenever I was sending a mail, for he was literate. When I went down to the coast to meet my bride, he went back home up to Menakha.

I next saw him half a year later, when we were coming down-country. He joined my escort at Menakha, before the dawn, and by daylight I noticed that his face was terribly marked with small-pox. He was a fellow who took considerable pride in his personal appearance: while I was framing suitable enquiries in my mind, he told me all about it. He was seized with small-pox soon after his return to Menakha, and his young wife looked after him as well as she could—neither having any knowledge of medicine. No one else came near him though, as an enlisted man, he was entitled to medical assistance.

I have met many types among the Arab gendarmerie; most were illiterate, as is the bulk of the population, but some were men of good breeding and fair education, according to local standards. Such had private means, and did not feel the pinch of want like the others.

Theirs is a wearing life. They are brought into contact with their compatriots under most unpopular conditions; in connection with taxes or trouble of some sort. In return, they are a special mark for anyone who can bowl them out over the Sheria, for they are always in the public eye and are easily traced.

They have to carry out the behests of an enfeebled administration somehow, and know that, if they are involved in any friction while executing their duty, they will probably be repudiated or rebuked.

The elder men recall with regret the days of the old régime, when they were a power in the land, with a grim and resolute government at their back. Now the pendulum has swung and they must sing small; there are a few pickings to be made, and they can't even get their pay.

They are the cog-wheels of Ottoman rule in Yamen, and go on working as smoothly as they can, when the motive power can hardly keep the machinery going.

Their fidelity is not altogether a virtue, for their deferred pay is a serious consideration, bound to curb any precipitate action that might jeopardize the government they serve. Once let them think that their arrears of pay will not be settled, or that a popular movement is going to sweep aside Turkish rule, and they will make common cause with their compatriots, and the present administration will, automatically, cease. The local authorities know this well enough, and never press a point that may involve them in friction with the Zaptieh.

They have hitherto always been able to meet an apparently hopeless deadlock with some timely concession, while they rely on non-interference to see them through with the population. Whatever may be said about Turkish officialdom, collectively, there is no doubt that individual officials in Yamen are showing remarkable tact and discretion under very trying conditions.

Unfortunately, Arabs have long memories. They do not credit their present rulers with any good intentions, but, remembering their past wrongs, consider the present leniency a sign of weakness and a presage of future freedom.

The relations between governors and governed in Yamen have undergone a radical change during the last

decade or two, owing to Turkey's laxity or inability to check the surreptitious import of arms.

This covert traffic has gradually undermined the pillars of Ottoman rule, honeycombing the whole vilayet as well as outland tribes.

Now the population is as well armed as the forces of government, far more numerous, and, on their own ground, more formidable, man for man.

Any attempt at disarmament would cause a general rising. Even in Ottoman strongholds like Menakha, tribesmen saunter through the streets with breech-loading rifles, and no vestige of authority to carry them.

There are weekly markets, at remote villages, where ammunition is sold openly in large quantities. The authorities must know of this, but they are powerless to prevent it. As a mudir once remarked to me: "What is the good of corking a broken bottle?"

Hitherto I have endeavoured to show the extent of Turkey's rule in Yamen, and the methods employed to maintain it peaceably. We will now consider her position if driven to use force.

The Ottoman army, in Yamen, is much below the numbers necessary for the safety of the vilayet.

Izzet Pasha's expedition of 1911 brought several European battalions to the country, armed with modern Mausers, burning smokeless powder. They have returned with their rifles, and all ammunition of that calibre has been shipped back to Europe or Asia Minor.

Yamen is garrisoned with Asiatic battalions, armed with the same weapon as the Zaptieh, and the one or two European battalions that are still left there are similarly armed.

The battalions allotted to Yamen are recruited from

Turkey's Asiatic provinces, and form the XIVth Army Corps. This musters two divisions of two regiments each, and each regiment is three battalions strong. The four-company system is in vogue, and the average strength of a company is a hundred men.

In 1913 large drafts were transferred to Europe and Asia Minor from the battalions still at Yamen. Of 10,000 reinforcements earmarked for the vilayet only 3000 have arrived up to date. I estimate the present strength of the XIVth Army Corps at 5000 men (April, 1914).

Its distribution changes with political conditions and local emergencies. The bulk of it is at Sanaa, and with the Imam. Hodeida comes next in importance as a military centre, and from here troops are detached to hold Loheia and the Loheia-Zahran line of posts along the Asîri frontier.

There is a battalion at Menakha, distributed among the forts and outlying posts. Detachments of it are scattered all over the district of Harraz down to Hejeilah.

The rest of the troops are posted at the principal towns of the Tihama and the central plateau, with detachments at outlying posts.

There are not enough men to go round. To give an example, there are but two companies at Beit al-Fakih, the centre of administration for the turbulent district of the Dheranik. As a natural consequence, the garrison has been beleaguered for months, and has yet to be relieved. Concentration is indicated, and yet it is difficult to say how this could be done without creating an upheaval in outlying districts, which would spread throughout the vilayet.

From a military point of view, a withdrawal to Menakha would be sound; that fortress town should then form the apex of a triangle, with its base on the coast, from Loheia to Mokha. Within that triangle the truculent tribes, at present out of hand, could be adequately dealt with. There is a strong Turkish position at Sheikh Said, and the country between there and Mokha could be easily safeguarded.

A line from Mokha, through Taiz and Moawiya to Kataba, would not be difficult to hold, for all these points are already garrisoned and connected by feasible routes.

The most fertile part of Yamen—the only part where taxes could be levied—would then be secured to Turkey. The rest of the vilayet could be left to stew in its own juice, thus freeing troops, at present frittered about in positions of doubtful strategical value, for the maintenance of order where such services are most required.

As for Sanaa, she can never feed herself, and is a constant drain on Ottoman resources. As a productive centre she is no longer of importance, and she will still consume her share of the import trade through Hodeida, whatever happens to her, unless she is effaced from the earth.

With the Imam an ally of Turkey, it might be well to reinstate him in Sanaa, with a compact force of Ottoman regular troops to stiffen his native levies, and, of course, guns.

Unfortunately, any withdrawal suggests weakness, and the evacuation of Sanaa might be the signal for a regular revolt. At the same time, I do not think that any tribal force could take Menakha, unless the Turks were off their guard, and as long as they hold that, they will be

able to maintain some semblance of sovereignty in Yamen.

Much has been said recently about the Turkish army, to its detriment. Its faults are traceable to slipshod organization, weak finance, and political unrest, rather than to inherent defects.

I can only speak with certainty about the troops I have met in Yamen, but as they come at the tail-end of the Ottoman army list, it is reasonable to suppose that they are not the pick of the lot.

The men are as hard as nails, cheery and loyal under conditions that would try both qualities. Last year they had been without pay for many months, but got their rations daily, and cheered the Sultan every evening (except Fridays) for that boon. My last glimpse of them at Menakha was in a cold September night, in driving fog, when the garrison, not on duty, assembled in the glare of torches outside the Hukoomah, on the Sultan's birthday, to hear his imperial message read, and shout till they were hoarse. They got an extra feed that night.

They hate service in Yamen ; it is a foreign country to them, and they never know when they will get away. They never pick up the language unless they happen to be Syrians, whom, by the way, the Yamen Arabs despise. They are not looked after well, and there is not the money to keep them properly clad or shod. Worst of all—to them—they may die out there, as is the lot of many, and their folk at home may only hear of it through the chance letter of a comrade—the idea of this disturbs them much.

There were two mutinies at Hodeida in the summer of 1913. On each occasion it was owing to troops who saw others leaving and feared that they might be left behind for good. Some hitch had occurred in the charter

of vessels required. Their officers were in no way to blame, and acted with firmness and tact.

There is no officer class as in our army. In Yamen I have seen many types. There is, for example, the officer of Abd ul Hamid's day—a capable old soldier, who probably got Irishman's promotion when the new Constitution was declared. He may be either a European Turk, with a Parisian polish, or an Asiatic of Mongolian type, who plays tric-trac in his leisure, and has an eye like a hawk for a horse, a woman, or a military situation.

Then there is the brand new product of German education. He is generally on the staff—smart, self-confident, with a thorough knowledge of his profession, and withal a man of the world.

I have met several such—good horsemen with sporting instincts—looking closely to the welfare of their men, knowing what ought to be done, and learning to content themselves with what *can* be done. They all speak French and German.

In contrast to these is the Syrian officer, whose native language is Arabic. He has perhaps been long in the country and married a native wife. Years of profitless exile have embittered him, for he is still a subaltern. He sees no prospect of a career in his profession, but performs, mechanically, a minimum of duty which has become monotonous and distasteful to him. He knows enough of the natives to distrust them thoroughly, and they dislike him. He seldom sees his men except on parade, and they have not the respect for him that an officer should command.

His jimcrack sword and gold-slashed tarboosh, hanging on the wall of his dingy quarters, remind him of his

early hopes, and a glimpse of the grim landscape, through the loopholes of his ramshackle dwelling, mock them and him. He usually finds himself on detached command, owing to his knowledge of the people and the country. His native wife has palled on him, for she is far below him in the scale of social evolution, and his one solace is a chat with some chance-met traveller, over a cup of coffee and a thimbleful of native arrack.

There is also the slovenly type. He has been a bit of a dog at home, and will tell you frankly that his present state of health is the result of his excesses in the past. He is practically an invalid—poor chap—liver and rheumatism maybe, so there is every excuse for him. He attends a parade when he feels up to it, and for the rest of the day is garbed in a stylish dressing gown and underclothing, relics of the time when he was a man of fashion. He hates Yamen, and finds the light duty he does too much for him. His chief enjoyment is derived from a gramophone and a varied assortment of records. He has several extracts from musical comedy, Turkish band pieces, Oriental love songs in a nasal whine, to suit the native taste, and can even switch on 'God bless the Prince of Wales.'

I have once encountered a wild, hairy type of Kurdish aspect, who bore the rank and badges of a captain, but was in one of the technical branches, being, in fact, an armourer, and not a bad armourer either.

Taking them all together, Turkish officers in Yamen are a capable set of men. That they have seldom any interest in the country is not their fault. They look on service in the vilayet as a necessary incident in their careers, which may, with luck, be avoided, and, if not, undergone with philosophy.

There is little chance of active service that will bring any advancement, and many possibilities of error that may compromise their whole career. Through it all they maintain a reasonable amount of discipline and efficiency in their command, and do their best to cope with covert discontent. One great gift they have, of infinite value in dealing with troops on unpopular service who seldom get their pay, they know when to notice things and when to look the other way.

Turks, generally, have a poor time in Yamen. The officials who made private fortunes there belong to the past; their successors cannot even get their salaries.

Keen officers sometimes volunteer for service in Yamen, but they are soon disillusioned, for there is no coherent policy there at present, and the financial straits of the administration are felt in every department. A fine old brigadier, whom I knew as a capable soldier and a good office worker, was asked to return to Yamen as Commander-in-Chief. He refused, unless the military chest were adequately filled. This has not yet been done.

The few Turkish ladies who find their way to Yamen must detest their exile there. They come out with their men folk, either in the civil or military departments, and never know when they will see home again. The female emancipation one reads about at Stamboul finds no place in Yamen, where social life is at its narrowest. Such literature as is available to them soon palls on those who can read. Some do fancy-work rather well, but the deadly monotony of their surroundings depresses them. Sanaa alone has any attraction for them. There they can stroll about, and visit each other in the garden quarter of Bir al-Azab, and go shopping in the native town.

There, too, in that walled city, they feel that they, and those they love, are fairly safe from sudden death, which is more than they are sure about at outlying posts.

There seems to be a general tendency at Stamboul to consolidate the Ottoman Empire. It is for the Porte to consider and decide whether to curtail Turkish rule in Yamen, within bounds that can be adequately administered, or to reinforce and finance the local government, so as to safeguard the vilayet within its present limits.

Persistent trifling with this problem is bound to lead, sooner or later, to disaster.

CHAPTER X

THE ALIEN'S LOT

THERE are few non-Moslem aliens in the interior of Yamen now. Such Greek traders as there were, have either left, or are on the point of leaving, on account of the commercial depression and general insecurity. When I was at Sanaa, in the autumn of 1913, there was still a worthy Italian merchant there, who, by his upright dealing and discreet conduct, had secured the good will of Turks and Arabs for more than a quarter of a century.

The Turkish authorities tolerate merchants who keep in towns, are engaged on obvious business which the official mind can grasp, and can be watched and spied upon as required. What they do not like is the unattached traveller on scientific research, which they cannot see the drift of, and which impels its devotee to wander in remote districts beyond their immediate ken—of course they can dog his heels with an escort, but the escort may not be discreet.

In days gone by the Ottoman Government in Yamen has always discouraged travellers, who might go home and shout about atrocities, thus involving it in difficulties with the Porte. Any atrocities that are taking place in Yamen just now are certainly not Turkish, or within Turkish jurisdiction.

There may be some suspicion of their next door neighbour, southward, for Britain still has a reputation for land-grabbing, though our pathetic attempts to cut loose from imperial responsibilities in Somaliland and the Aden hinterland should disarm suspicion on *that* point.

Whatever the cause, the fact remains that alien travellers in Yamen, especially British, have been the victims of official persecution, or worse, ever since the Turks have had anything to do with the country.

To go back to the first Ottoman occupation of Yamen, we hear of Admiral Sir H. Midleton being sent, by the East India Company, on a trading voyage to Mokha in 1610.

The Turks treacherously attacked all strangers in the town and ships in the harbour. He and part of his crew, after being surprised and overpowered, were manacled like slaves, thrown into dungeons, and threatened with execution. They were then taken to Sanaa, and finally remanded back to Mokha, where they were released with a stern injunction that neither they nor any of their compatriots should revisit the ports of Yamen.

Captain Saris, of the same service, who visited Mokha next year, was treated with more civility. The French had already a commercial treaty and a factory at Mokha.

In 1618 Captain Shelling of the Royal Anne got a firman from the Imam of Sanaa and the Governor of Mokha, permitting English to traffic in any port of Yamen.

Twenty years later the French bombarded Mokha to extract debts to the value of some £18,000. They

made the 'dowlah' or local governor pay up, besides reducing duties from 3 to 2½ per cent.

Mokha was the last town in Yamen held by the Turks at the close of their first occupation. They must have been a lively lot there—we hear of the fumigation of Indian subjects, with sulphur, to extort money—this combination of hygienic principles with profit is a truly oriental touch.

Under Arab rule aliens fared better. Niebuhr's expedition of 1763 was well received, though ill-fated, for all but Niebuhr died of disease or accident.

Early in the nineteenth century, Pringle, the British representative at Mokha, visited the Imam's court at Sanaa, and was received with courtesy.

After the return of Turkish rule in 1849, alien travellers again were exposed to annoyance and disaster. Deflers, the French botanist, was harried by the Vali at Sanaa in '89, though he received friendly treatment elsewhere in the vilayet, and was travelling under firman.

Harris, who entered in disguise from the Aden frontier in '91, was seized at Sanaa and sent down a prisoner at Hodeida ; so was Wavell, who went up from Hodeida in disguise in 1910. Burckhardt and Benzoni were murdered near Odein, the same year, by Arabs, who are said to have mistaken them for Turks.

The European staff of the Hodeida-Sanaa railway scheme were in the country to serve the interests of the Ottoman Empire. Even *it* complained of lukewarm co-operation on the part of the local authorities, though, I think, it failed to realize the difficulties confronting them, and the slight amount of control they really exercised.

I reached Hodeida in the late autumn of 1912 (directly after the Italian blockade of the Yamen coast had ceased), with Ottoman credentials to the local governor or mutasarraf. In spite of many minor annoyances, which the seasoned traveller disregards, I was allowed to conduct my zoological researches under certain restrictions—rational enough in view of the disturbed state of the country—until the Vali decided that I had been long enough in the vilayet. An ordinary European official would have written and told me as much, with some semblance of courteous regret, and I should have felt compelled to withdraw with thanks for favours up to date. This, however, is not the way of the oriental satrap.

First of all, difficulties were made about the site of our camp at Sôk al-Khamîs—a matter that I had already thrashed out with the Vali, as he passed through on his way to Sanaa from the coast. Our consular representative was asked to recall us on the score of personal risk. I was able to convince him that these fears were groundless.

Then two shots were fired close to our camp, one dark, stormy night, causing the local authorities much apparent alarm and anxiety. I turned the camp guard out, but we failed to get our man. I knew by the sound, and the short interval between the shots, that they were fired from an automatic weapon using smokeless powder, and traced the incident to a Turk up at the post, who was said to have been testing an automatic pistol previous to purchase. The fact that this detachment was leaving next day for service with the Imam, gave colour to the explanation.

The powers that be now began to stir themselves, and

the poor old mudir at Sôk al-Khamîs (a friend of mine, who loved a quiet life) was harassed by official telegrams. I had to send a runner at last to district headquarters, explaining that I had not been killed, wounded, or even fired at, and that the shots in question were not a demonstration of local antipathy ; and still the scare was sedulously fanned in official circles.

The intrigue behind it all was obvious enough, so I decided to go up to Sanaa and come to close quarters with the Vali. He had already invited my wife and me to visit the city, but I took care to have the invitation confirmed before we started.

Shortly after our arrival I paid a formal call on the Vali, and was received in depressing silence, in an austerely furnished audience-chamber, among many local notables. These sat bolt-upright on chairs all round the room. As each man came in he saluted the Vali, who waved him to a seat. He himself was dressed in black broadcloth, and wore a red tarboosh. He lolled, somewhat ill at ease, in an armchair, upholstered in crimson plush, at the upper end of the room—a dark, heavy-jowled Syrian of middle age and portly figure. I was the only non-Moslem present, and hardly knew two people there ; after returning their salutations, I sat and watched and waited like everyone else.

The Vali rang a hand-bell, and in came a man in a black frock-coat and trousers, wearing the usual red tarboosh, to bring certain papers. I recognized him as the erstwhile governor of Menakha, whom I had last seen in a smoking cap, an antiquated lounge suit and blucher boots. We gazed at each other without recognition—he was now the Vali's secretary, on duty.

After his departure the solemn hush was only broken by occasional whispers among the congregation (I cannot call it an audience).

Tall candles burnt at the other end of the room, and all the scene really required was a corpse.

A dozen Arab gendarmes came in, kissed the Vali's hand, and took their places at the lower end of the room, while he harangued them about their duty, and spoke reassuringly, but vaguely, of their back pay, and the advantages of their service. I gathered that there had been some reluctance to proceed on duty, and admired his obvious grip of the situation.

They said that his will was theirs, he being their father—and withdrew. Several members of the levée retired too, but I sat tight, for I wanted to get a word with the Vali if possible, or, failing him, the next in civil authority. 'Still hunting' is a feature of a naturalist's life, and I knew I could endure that seance as long as anybody.

Occasionally a man rose, saluted the Vali, and withdrew. It all reminded me of a game I used to play, in my extreme youth, called 'Family Coach.' The resemblance was completed when the Vali clutched the arms of his chair, and we all rose and pressed toward him to take our leave. I hung back behind the rest, but had to pass out without a word, as they did. My whilom friend, the secretary, accosted me as I left the presence, and from him I understood that there would be no objection to my working the neighbourhood for birds, etc.

On the strength of this information I took a house, but we had hardly moved in before troubles began. The house was watched, and I was dogged everywhere I

went by town police—furtive prowlers in French grey and cerise, a uniform I learned to dislike. Then my escort of Zaptieh was withdrawn, and I heard that the umbashi in charge, who had been with us at Sôk al-Khamîs, was arrested—no one knew why, or where he was. Next a police officer called—a courteous creature in cream and crimson, reminding me of damson tart. He said that the Chief of Police wished to see me, and I gathered that officialdom desired our immediate departure. I drove round to the Hukoomah with my resplendent friend in a rickety shandrydan that he had waiting. There I was again requested to leave at once. I insisted on seeing the Vali, and was shown up to his office.

After formal greetings on both sides, he commenced a hurried harangue, stating that he was not going to find me an escort any longer. All this was reasonable enough, though it might have been put less abruptly, but when I pointed out that we could not leave at a moment's notice, he flew into a rage and threatened me with fetters. Even an oyster would have felt roused: he and I used the same brand of Arabic, and in that stately but efficient tongue I briefly sketched his previous attitude, contrasted it with his present conduct, and defied him. I *did* mention that he was treacherous and tyrannical, but, beyond calling him a Syrian, was in no sense abusive.

We parted with some asperity.

My wife and I sat tight all next day, after making arrangements for any emergency, and I awaited arrest, the house being still picketed by police.

The day after, the Vali sent an ambassador proposing that we should leave at our convenience in a few days. I refused to do so, and was asked what my terms were.

By this time I knew that it was impossible to work afield much beyond Sanaa, as the Turks had lost their grip on the country, and I should certainly not be allowed to make my own arrangements with the Arabs. I therefore stipulated for another clear month at Sanaa, an adequate escort, and permission to range where I would.

These terms were granted.

I quite saw, and still see, the Vali's point of view. A naturalist must work afield, and Turkey can no longer guarantee the safety of anyone outside the towns she holds or off the road connecting them. His chief aim and policy is to keep the peace if he can, and avoid unnecessary responsibility. The truculent demeanour he adopted at first was presumably an attempt to intimidate me into compliance without further trouble, and perhaps to impress the local population. The peremptory treatment of Christians, especially subjects of a major Power, tends to fan the dying embers of Turkish prestige in Arabia, and is much easier than strong, consistent government.

News of the attitude adopted by British diplomacy regarding the re-occupation of Adrianople had just reached Sanaa, and may have had some bearing on the case.

The Vali adhered faithfully to his bargain, and I was very busy for the rest of my stay at Sanaa. We received and returned several calls among the Ottoman community, chiefly officers, who expressed some satisfaction at my passage of arms with the civil authority.

I have nothing but gratitude to Turkish officialdom in general for having been allowed to conduct my researches in the country. Even the Vali's attitude had its compensations for, had he behaved more tactfully, I should

have felt obliged to comply with his injunction as soon as possible, and so missed securing specimens of considerable scientific value.

Practically all the alien population now is centred in Hodeida, where even missionaries are allowed, though covert difficulties are put in their way at every turn.

While the population of Sanaa has decreased remarkably in the last twenty years, that of Hodeida shows a slight upward tendency.

In the absence of any official figures, I estimate its present population at 42,000. There are about one hundred Europeans, of whom most are Greeks, who have shops in the town.

There were no residential British-born subjects at the commencement of 1914, but there is a community of British Indians of nearly a thousand souls.

The few Europeans belonging to the greater Powers are merchants engaged in the shipping trade or consular representatives, or both. They are most hospitable, and well it is for the traveller that they are so, for the only semblance of an hotel in the place is a sort of casino on the seafront, overlooking the garbage-strewn water of the stagnant harbour.

In spite of the climate and their half-civilized environment they maintain the amenities of social life gallantly. Every married household has its 'At Home,' and guests brave the wind-swept alleys after dark in the wake of an Arab *kavass*, who carries a lantern exactly like a suburban street-lamp.

Hodeida is not badly policed. Watchmen are scattered throughout the town within shouting distance of each other. They patrol a short beat, and pass a long-drawn howl along at intervals to show that they are



THE CLUB GROUNDSMAN—A TIHAMA TYPE.

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awake. Life and property are reasonably secure, except when the troops get out of hand, and *then* they do not interfere with foreigners as a rule, but fight it out between themselves and loot the bazars. Some years ago armed mutineers threw themselves into a mosque on the outskirts of the town, and defied the authorities. The Turks duly notified the consular corps of their impending action, and then knocked that mosque about with a small cannon until the mutineers surrendered—on terms. Last year they had to face some three thousand troops in open mutiny. For some days lawlessness was rife, but a judicious blend of cajolery and force, with a little bloodshed, straightened matters out.

Clumsy pickpockets abound in the bazars, and, to study native character, one might do worse than stroll that way with a pocketful of small change and watch the attempts to take it and the delinquent's bearing when discovered.

There is a tennis court near Hodeida in a walled garden outside the town. Here many of the Europeans assemble from time to time, and social functions are held.

The European merchant has much to contend with. Apart from the dilatory, slipshod methods of the Customs and the primitive means of handling cargo, he has to face keen competition as the inland trade dwindles. If he invests any capital up country to give an impetus to affairs in which he is interested, the odds are that he does not get his money back. The Arabs know that he cannot go inland to collect the sums due to him, and if he did, there is no legal machinery that can help him. This undermines all credit. He toils on, however, pitting his wits against the mesh of intrigue and

chicanery that envelops him, and hopes for a turn in the commercial tide.

When he gets fever he takes quinine, and when he feels dull or depressed he hunts up his kind. If he can, he gets away for the hot weather, and if he can't, he sees it through cheerfully.

His chief aim and object is to do as well as he can, and keep clear of the little cemetery of white, crossless tombs that gleam forlornly in the desert beyond the north-eastern outskirts of the town.

CHAPTER XI

CURRENT EVENTS AND A FORECAST

TURKEY'S position in Yamen concerns us closely, for there is no natural frontier between the tribes she is supposed to govern and the Aden Protectorate: in fact, some tribes are on both sides of the boundary line, and owe divided allegiance.

If order could only be restored in the vilayet, no one would be better pleased than the authorities at Aden, who are in the position of respectable householders adjoining a firework factory.

Aden herself has withstood, and will always withstand, any tribal attack that could possibly be delivered, even if tribesmen were not too shrewd to run their heads against such a fortress. But we are still committed to certain obligations in the Aden hinterland if treaties mean anything at all. These obligations were rightly incurred to secure the allegiance of our immediate neighbours and the comparative safety of trade routes. It is for us to consider how we stand with regard to our treaty tribes if they are faced with attack and pillage owing to tribal anarchy across the border.

The authorities might view with equanimity a certain amount of strife and bloodshed among the clans of the Subaihi—a tribe that has always been lawless and untract-

able to British or Turkish influence, while it can look after itself better than any other tribe in the Aden Protectorate, and has no economic value.

This is not the case with the other two protected tribes that adjoin the Ottoman frontier: the Amîri and Haushabi are productive and settled, and have observed their treaty obligations with us. They have also shown themselves incapable of resisting encroachment from across the border, for we had to interfere and protect both since this century began. Through their territory run the principal trade routes to Aden.

So long as Turkey has any sort of hold on Yamen we have, through her, some feasible channel of redress for tribal aggression or encroachment on the Aden frontier.

There is some talk of an Ottoman expedition co-operating with the Imam against the Idrìsi this autumn (1914) but, unless the Porte puts more 'drive' into it than has marked previous attempts, the expedition will not effect much and rebellion will be fanned, not quenched. Turkey has already nominated a sub-governor for Asîr—a definite step, but hardly adequate. It seems time enough to talk about the subjugation of that province when the Tihama tribes near Hodeida have been brought to heel. I refer to the Dheranik and the lawless clans that beset the trade routes to the maritime capital. They are still defying the local authorities.

The question that concerns us is whether Turkey can maintain some semblance of control in Yamen, and if she means to do so. We know she has been flying financial kites all over Europe, and is now in funds, but we also know that her remaining European provinces and Asia Minor have first claim upon her, in accordance with the

policy of consolidation which she was well advised to adopt. The northern provinces of Arabia come next in natural importance to her—Syria has long been clamouring for autonomy, and is at present wildly indignant about alleged election frauds in connection with the appointment of her representatives in the new Parliament. The Hejaz is in a more turbulent state than usual, and Mesopotamia is seething with political unrest, which is being fomented by agents of the Emir of Nejd.

To crown all, public feeling generally is against the fresh system of taxation, and the new Budget shows a deficit of £T. 4,000,000. The chances of a strong and adequately supported policy in Yamen seem remote, and yet it behoves Turkey to set her house in order there if she means to keep the vilayet.

Right up between her Asiatic provinces drives the desert wedge of independent Arabia, with Nejd as its nucleus and central force.

Nejd—after many years of stormy rule—is now governed by a scion of the Saoud dynasty (Abd ul-Aziz bin Saoud), with the title of Emir.

In the summer of 1913 he led a masterly raid into the Turkish province of al-Hassa and, by a brilliant *coup de main* took Hofuf (assisted by the townsfolk), and all other Ottoman posts in the province fell to him. He packed the Turks off to Bussorah, with what belongings they could carry, and sent with them a note to the governor of that vilayet pointing out that through forty years of misrule the Turkish government had failed to make good in al-Hassa, and that he meant to resist by force any attempt to retake the province.

He remained the Sultan's obedient servant.

The desert confines of Nejd discourage Ottoman reprisals, nor has there been any attempt to win back al-Hassa as yet. Meanwhile the Emir, in his capital of Riadh, is consolidating his dominions and considering the next move.

Marching up the Dawâsir valley along the great caravan route, an expeditionary force from Nejd could emerge in turbulent and disaffected Asîr to strike at central Yamen. Here too there have been forty-three years of Turkish rule, and the Arabs have had enough of it.

There are already rumours of further warlike activity in Nejd, with a view to expansion. The Emir is a young man (about twenty-two), but he knows his own mind, is a dashing leader, and has bold but crafty counsellors, whom he always consults. His aim is a tribal-governed Arabian empire, with the central authority in Nejd. Let him but advance up Wadi Dawâsir when the Turks and the Imam are bickering with the Idrìsi, and the tribes will flock to his standard from all directions, and Yamen will fall to his grasp like an over-ripe pear.

Any Turkish operations against the Idrìsi that promise success may probably precipitate matters, for the rebel leader would appeal to Nejd—he is already in touch with the Emir, and would naturally prefer, for himself and the tribes he controls, autonomy with an Arab suzerain to bloody subjugation and Turkish sovereignty.

Nejd drove the Star and Crescent from her borders and shook the Hejaz to its centre little more than a century ago. Her triumph in al-Hassa is still ringing in the ears of Arabs, who dislike Turkish rule and look covertly to the Emir as the champion of Arabian freedom. She is no mere barbaric confederation of half-

armed and badly organized tribes. Little is known of her by the outside world now, but this much is certain, that the Emir's forces are armed as well as any troops that Turkey could bring against them. All the ammunition, cannon and *mitrailleuses* of the al-Hassa garrisons fell into the hands of the Emir when the Turks surrendered that province. The fact that he permitted the evacuating troops to depart with their rifles shows that he does not lack small arms.

He still acknowledges the Sultan as Khalif, but repudiates the Ottoman Government and all its works.

The deposal of Abd ul-Hamid and the inauguration of the Constitution weakened Turkey's hold on the Moslem races. The title of Khalif means 'successor,' and is personal. It cannot be bestowed by a temporal government working for its own ends—with the best intentions no doubt—in a mere corner of the Moslem world.

The Arabs look to the present Sultan as Khalif (for there must always be a Khalif in Islam), but they have no sympathy with the power that appointed him without consulting them. A Khalif can only be set aside or appointed by the general expressed will of all Moslems. That was of course impracticable in this case, and I do not suppose that the Turks troubled their heads about it—but the Arabs do.

This is only one of the anomalies that rise from a spiritual dignitary being vested with temporal powers of doubtful stability. Modern Turkey's chief problem is pan-Islamism and all it implies.

Abd ul-Hamid—as Sultan—was a Moslem of the Moslems, and stood for orthodox Islam. He even

refused to grant an audience to the Agha Khan[1] of Bombay as head of the Shiah schism.

With him you were either a Sunni (or orthodox Moslem) and a factor in Islam or you were not, and did not count.

This is exactly the attitude to suit Arabia (where the Shiah element is comparatively unimportant), but it had to be modified by an enlightened Constitution that identified itself with union and progress. Unfortunately these two qualities do not go hand in hand throughout the Ottoman Empire, and are never likely to.

The present Turkish Government is treading the doubtful path of those who habitually deal in half measures. It is at present confronted with diplomatic tension concerning the ill-treatment of Greeks in Thrace and Asia Minor. Turkey may or may not want war with Greece and the chance of winning back Salonica, but unless her Moslem subjects come to heel a crisis may occur before she is ready to meet it.

She has already lost Tripoli through similar causes.

The whole trend of modern Turkish thought is national rather than pan-Islamic, for educated Turks realize that anti-Christian feelings, which are the real driving force of that great movement, must be curbed if Turkey-in-Europe is to hold together.

Trite sayings in ornate Arabic character adorn the walls of many a cultured Turkish home, and a common one is this, "Be a Turk—a Moslem if you will, but first and foremost a Turk." Against this feeling there are the Asiatic provinces, with their strong anti-Christian prejudice and total disregard or complete

[1] A lineal descendant of the 'Old Man of the Mountains' and an excellent judge of Arab polo-ponies.

ignorance of the European problems that confront Turkish rule. This is largely Turkey's fault, she has always found it expedient to fan the embers of Moslem prejudice to keep her own pot boiling, and, during her trouble with the Balkan States, she scattered broadcast throughout Arabia highly-coloured accounts and crude illustrations of mythical victories.

Turkish Arabia has been kept in ignorance of Turkey's real position in Europe, but is now beginning to find out for herself, mistrusting official sources of information and even underrating the status of her suzerain.

The problems that confront Ottoman rule might daunt the sanest government, and yet in Stamboul—where at least consistent and united purpose might be looked for—the state of affairs betokens national insanity.

Plot after plot comes to light, and is hardly crushed than others appear like wasps in summer.

There is practically a military dictatorship, of which the least that can be said is that it does not tend to political unity or constitutional methods, while its disregard of consequences fills friends of Turkey with dismay.

Stable government and sound finance alone can save the Ottoman Empire.

I have mentioned the financial embarrassment of Turkish administration in Yamen, the other Arabian vilayets are in much the same predicament; and Turkey is wasting good money on Dreadnoughts.

Every government office in Yamen had a collecting box last year with a picture of one of these monsters thereon, flying the Ottoman flag.

This naval expenditure is presumably for eventualities with Greece but, as one who sympathizes with Turkey in her troubles, I hope she will learn to handle her new toys before she takes them into action. To put all your eggs into one basket is imprudent; to drop the basket is disaster.

The late Commander of the Hamidieh is to be in charge of one of these capital ships.[1] A better man could hardly have been selected. He was down at Hodeida last summer with the Hamidieh. Discipline and efficiency marked his entire command, and the contrast with the usual Turkish methods was the subject of general comment. This officer once remarked that Turkey could buy Dreadnoughts and, at a pinch, man them, but had no one fit to take charge of such vessels.

All the time Turkey's Arabian troubles are steadily drawing to a head, and there is a general ebb of financial and military resources from her remoter provinces.

I saw a good deal of Ottoman rule in Yamen, and came to the conclusion that the Turk is an able man, with a natural gift of handling Moslems and getting the best results from them with the least possible outlay. Collectively their administration is hopeless, for it lacks consistency or singleness of purpose. The civil and military departments do not hit it off, and I gather that this is the case elsewhere in the Ottoman dominions.

The real weakness of Turkey's rule lies in the mixed races and creeds she attempts to govern. It is not as if these were small half-merged units that could be fused in one homogeneous whole—they are large and sharply defined divisions that only good statecraft can reconcile.

[1] Commandeered by Great Britain at the outbreak of European hostilities.

One of the first principles of statecraft in dealing with Oriental is never to back one ruler in preference to others unless he is, by personal qualities, position or resources, fitted to wield paramount power. That is, if a chief cannot rule unassisted it is very little use trying to support him with overt force among warlike races, for the mere fact of alien armed assistance will create enemies for him until he becomes a sort of lightning conductor for any political storms, and his suzerain gets the shock.

In 1911 the Ottoman authorities in Yamen followed the line of least resistance, and inaugurated an *entente* with the Imam rather than subdue his adherents, and then give him what measure of power they chose. They have, in past years, made the mistake of spurning the local Imams after their second occupation of Yamen. A little tact and generosity in earlier days would have saved them much trouble and an ambiguous position.

It never pays to take sides in tribal affairs unless you are backing a certainty, for tribal politics shift too quickly and completely for anyone to follow: no administration is more delicately balanced than that of a south Arabian ruler who is merely a figurehead—unless he possesses extraordinary personality—and has, moreover, no legislative council to blame if things go wrong.

Turkey has backed her fancy in Yamen, and has put her money on the wrong horse. Now she has to support her protégé against the tribes he is supposed to control, and if she stands to her engagement with him there is no saying how far she may be involved eventually.

The chequered, tottering rule of previous Imams is written plainly enough on the pages of history; the

Turks re-entered Yamen on the troublous tide of political faction between two rival Imams.

There is a vast difference between setting up a ruler on your own initiative and being compelled to recognize him by force of circumstances. Turkey might have done the first, but ignored the situation until she was compelled to adopt the second alternative. Her prestige and purse have suffered in consequence.

Yamen is a perfect example of the ultimate results accruing from a policy of drift and expediency—tainted too with contempt on the part of the ruling race for its native subjects.

The local authorities trifled with the prevention of gun-running to their own undoing. They ignored the office of Imam until they had to recognize it. After years of extortion they went to the other extreme, in panic at the gathering forces arrayed against them, and abolished dues to which they are justly entitled. They collect such taxes as are left to them, along the line of least resistance, thereby putting a premium on lawlessness and opposition to their sway. Among the logical consequences of this policy that now confront them are general discontent and unrest, an expensive and fragile puppet to maintain, an impoverished country which is a constant drain on Ottoman resources, waning power and a tattered prestige.

And what a chance they have missed! By birthright, creed and temperament no one is better fitted to rule Moslems than the Turks. If only their administrative ability were on a par with their other gifts, pan-Islamism would be the greatest vital force in the world. They are the natural rulers of Islamic races, born with the sceptre in their hand, and they have thrown it away. Indi-

viduals among them still show what a Turkish administrator could really be under a stable and consistent central government.

They could have made Yamen their finest province in Asia with its industrial population and undeveloped natural resources.

Egypt is but an arable strip on each side of a big ditch that often disappoints agricultural expectations. We saved her from insolvency, made her a prosperous country, and are barely tolerated.

The Turks entered Yamen at a time when any firm rule would have been welcome, and got control of a fertile country with a boundless water supply if they had only been able to handle it. Yet they could not improve on the agricultural methods of the country, and cannot point to a single public work undertaken, completed and maintained for the public weal.

They have no continuity of purpose, and many schemes of theoretical excellence have been inaugurated in Yamen to die of inanition for lack of sustenance and support. For example, free and technical education are both to be found in the vilayet. The first means a few scantily attended schools in the principal centres, and the second an almost deserted house and garden outside Hodeida, where there is a handloom and some excellent tools for carpentry, etc., but no regular pupils.

The proper development of Yamen, with its difficult terrain, is a task of magnitude, but it would have been well worth attempting, and no attempt has been made.

The Turkish authorities had the prestige of their race and the experience of former rule in Yamen to help them, yet have even failed to gain the toleration of the people

they have governed consecutively for the last forty years.

There used to be an idea in certain quarters that we would back Turkey in any case owing to our relations with Moslem India. This idea is reduced to an absurdity in connection with Arabia, for who would support her in troubles of her own creation with oriental Moslems to retain the loyalty of other oriental Moslems?

There is a marked tendency throughout Turkish Arabia to revert to patriarchal or tribal rule, with or without some central authority. The Emir of Nejd thinks he can take advantage of this tendency, and is—from his position and prestige—the man to do it if anyone can.

We, with our interest on the shores of the Persian and Aden Gulfs and along the valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris, would do well to watch events. Most great Moslem movements have taken us by surprise for, though we have a vast amount of Mohamedan fellow-subjects, we seldom get into close touch with them.

All the Aden authorities know of their hinterland is contained in a few office files or filters through tortuous native channels. It is now a recognized feature of Imperial policy to let sleeping dogs lie, and if they are not sleeping to pretend that they are or at least not attempt to find out for ourselves.

Our position at Aden is that of a man, who does not know much about horses, riding behind a friend whose mount has its ears back. He hopes his friend will come to no harm, but is still more anxious not to stop a kick himself, and has the vaguest idea as to what he ought to do if both nags get restive.

Ottoman rule in Yamen is an object-lesson in the government of native races. We can not only see the inevitable result of negligent administration but the subterranean workings of a covert force which will, sooner or later, undermine all governments in the world that control alien subject races. That control has been obtained in the first instance by force of arms, either implied or openly demonstrated. So long as modern invention kept advancing in the evolution of small arms colonial Powers could be reasonably sure that their forces would be better armed than the native races they governed. Now that the modern rifle has attained approximate perfection as a weapon of war and can be produced and retailed at a price within the reach of all, the surreptitious gun trade will soon catch up to it and arm the governed as efficiently as the forces of government.

Those powers which rule vast numbers of alien subjects in remote quarters of the globe will have to combine to cut off this traffic at its sources or guard their uttermost borders against it or curtail their control of the races they administer.

Trifling with these alternatives has brought Turkey to the predicament which now confronts her in Yamen. Her turn has come first because she has not sufficient resources to arm her colonial troops with the best weapons obtainable or to guard her coasts adequately against gun-runners, while her administrative methods have raised for her a heavy crop of trouble.

Arabia, with her extensive seaboard, her warlike tribes and stormy politics, is a natural market for arms. Her unhappy political state is largely the outcome of the arms traffic, which encourages her to defy established authority.

We view her troubles with composure, but might bear in mind that illicit arms are only kept out of Egypt by stringent preventive measures at considerable cost, and trickle through Abyssinia into the Soudan by a thousand elusive channels that cannot be closed.

Our Somaliland troubles are the direct outcome of this traffic, which has spread all over Africa. Its principal distributing centres on the Red Sea littoral are Jibouti, in French Somaliland (where large commercial interests are involved), and Massowa, in the Italian colony of Erythrea, whence arms were freely shipped to rebellious Asîr during the Turco-Italian war.

There *is* no ethical side to this question, but it is a curious fact that the very nations that are trying to control half-conquered and warlike races with comparatively few organized troops, and whose rule is therefore jeopardized by the gun trade, should yet hesitate to check it and even use it as a covert weapon against an adversary.

I hold no brief for civilization, which may as well die out if it cannot justify its existence, but it seems a remarkable paradox that it should forge weapons to be used against itself.

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